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**"SLANT MANIFESTO"**

# **Catholics and the Left**

**by Adrian Cunningham, Terry Eagleton,  
Brian Wicker, Martin Redfern,  
and Laurence Bright OP**

**with an Introduction by Neil Middleton**

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*Neil Middleton*

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# Introduction/*Neil Middleton*

I remember when I was a young Oxford Scholar, that he could not endure to heare of the *New* [Cartesian] *Philosophy*: For, sayd he, if a new Philosophy is brought-in, a new Divinity will shortly follow; and he was right. [John Aubrey, *The Life of Edward Davenant*.]

As both Davenant and Aubrey observed, a fundamental change in philosophy is usually followed by a fundamental change in religious thinking. What neither of them probably realised is that both are necessarily part of a general cultural scene. It is platitudinous to say that the way in which people think about everything is profoundly affected by the world in which they live. A glance at the old testament provides a striking example of the truth of this: the development of the Jewish idea of God and his dealings with men is given a new dimension with every major change in Jewish social organisation. In the case of Christianity, the effects of the great European revolutions have been fairly clearly marked on the development of its doctrine. Descartes was part of a general revolution in European ideas and society—indeed, he was one of the key figures in that revolution, and

has left his mark, for good or ill, on all subsequent thinking, not the least on theological thinking. What we have to see is that we, too, are involved in a major revolution which will affect our thinking more profoundly than any that has taken place hitherto. We can say this with confidence, not because it is simply the latest in a long succession of such revolutions, but because it is the largest, in terms of the numbers of people it involves, and because it covers explicitly a greater area of human activity and life.

Revolutions, bloody or peaceful, are a perpetual condition of mankind<sup>1</sup>; it is, therefore, almost impossible to date the end of one and the beginning of another. The roots of one are almost invariably to be found in the orthodoxy that marked the end of the last, and so on; the interconnection is often of a complexity to defy analysis. However it is convenient to date our modern revolution from October 1917, the successful soviet revolution. Here was the first formal effect, so to say, of the work of Karl Marx. Naturally, this is to oversimplify: the Russian revolution had far more causes than the work of one man. But Marx could be pointed to in a very sure way as the principal ideologue, through Lenin, of the Bolshevik rising. In the political arena this is true of many other countries since

<sup>1</sup> This idea was used to great effect by Trotsky. See especially his *Permanentnaya Revolyutsia*, Berlin 1930.

(think, for instance, of China, Algeria, Cambodia, Cuba, and Ghana), and will no doubt continue to be true for many decades to come. The rise of socialism both inside Europe and outside it, with the conspicuous exception of the USA, has become at the very least a feature, a conditioning factor, of change in most countries of the world. Even the USA, which seems committed to seeing socialism entirely in terms of the soviet oligarchic orthodoxy, is compelled to take it into account in some way, even if it can only respond to it with bigger and better bombs.

Change of this kind cannot be thought of only in terms of political power, as both Terry Eagleton and Adrian Cunningham point out in this book; properly understood, politics is not merely this, but must be seen as the grammar of human relationships. There are basically three types of change open to any society. The first, and the most unfortunate, is simply regression. In the USA, the John Birch Society would be a typical example of the advocates of such change; in England we have Primrose League conservatism—both are harking back to a distant mythical order in which perfection is supposed to have reigned. The second type of change is produced by people who are often painfully aware of the abuses and wrongs of their society, but feel that change can only come from within, that what is needed is not revolution but



reform. Again, two examples of such an approach would be the Kennedy Democrats of the USA and the British Labour Party, the latter having abandoned its socialist origins in favour of a reformist approach to capitalism. The third kind of change is often closely connected with the second, in the sense that the adherents of both tend to waver from position to position depending on what they are considering—this type may be thought of as genuine revolution. The radical feels that what is needed is a fundamental change in the bases of his society—that reform will not cure the ills, but merely smother them until they burst out with new virulence in some other way. He is offering a new society, and it is here that we have to make a careful distinction. Much ineffective revolutionary thinking has consisted of a kind of utopianism, in which the would-be radical has tried to construct a new type of society which has little or nothing in common with what has gone before. Conversely, many people will attack revolutionaries on the ground that what they are offering is strange, inhuman, unfamiliar.

Both groups are making the same mistake. It is simply a fact that men are defined, so to speak, by their social relationships—that their thinking is conditioned by the world in which they live. On the one hand, a revolutionary programme cannot succeed if it is conceived in terms of a carefully

detailed social plan which is to replace that which it is overthrowing, and, on the other hand, those who resist revolutionary change will continue to be bewildered if this is what they have in mind. No, successful revolution can only occur if what it offers is a new way of looking at things—normally one which will have grown, often by way of reaction, out of that which it aims at superseding.

Among Roman Catholics the three types of change are also to be found. The first is probably typified by the Latin Mass Society, and is not worth serious consideration. The second is to be seen among those who have accepted without reservation the idea of *aggiornamento*; and the third can be found, among other places, in the work offered here. The uncritical acceptance of *aggiornamento* can be loosely compared to the work of the Labour Party; it represents a desire not to change the church but, as the word itself suggests, to bring it up to date.

Many things are seen as wrong by the modern reformers; they are aware of abuses of practice within the Roman Church, of failures in charity, of restrictive and unnecessary concepts, but feel that these can be changed without altering the way in which we think of the church. Much as the Labour Party imagines that, if only inequalities can be smoothed out by the use of nationalising

techniques, we can manage very nicely without a deep reassessment of what society is, and what its relationships should be; or, in other words, that by making these changes it will have changed a capitalist society into a socialist one. The point made in this book is that both are wrong. I believe that the way in which they are both wrong is very similar: it consists in thinking that there are certain essentials that are unchangeable.

I have said that successful revolution is only possible if the revolutionary can offer a persuasive and satisfactory way of looking at things different from that which governs his society at present. In the case of the church and of English society I think it possible to do this in terms of the way in which we consider the question of what is, or is not, essential. A crude description of the way in which many people think of the church would run along these lines: it would start with the assumption that there is a body of identifiable truth, called "Christian teaching", which contains within itself a series of reference points true for all time and unalterable. The account would then go on, in a semi-deductive manner, to draw up patterns of behaviour considered appropriate to the *mores* of the age which are held to depend for their validity on these Christian truths. The description given in these terms would be underlined by references to the way in which things have changed consider-



ably in the church without altering its fundamental beliefs.

There are two objections to this view offered by the radical, both of them related. The first is that this way of thinking of truth is inadequate; and the second is that, if change is really profound, then it inevitably carries with it a change in belief. This is not the place for a thorough theological account of how the former, and current, view proves to be inadequate, but a few points might be made. Truth, or teaching, is not something independent of the society in which it occurs—there is not, as it were, a lump of truth at which successive generations can quarry. When we talk of Christian truth, it can only have meaning if we realise that what we say of Christianity has to do with our ability to communicate with one another—our ability to manifest Christ to, and see him in, one another. It is difficult for us to look at this in an extra-ecclesiastical way because we have for so long known the church as a parallel society to that of the world. Indeed, at one time an elaborate theory of the church and state both being perfect societies was universally held among catholics. The schizophrenia engendered by such a view is to be seen in the phenomenon of "Sunday catholicism". Clearly, to construct a community within a community (as we have done with the church), and then to think of that community as having its own



internal logic to which the larger community (the un-Christian world) must be converted, is an abdication of the Christian mission. It is an attempt (self-falsifying) to treat truth apart from its instances, its situation. Christ did not come to found what we are pleased to call a church; he came to save men, and men do not exist in isolation but are born into a series of complex relationships.<sup>1</sup> It is these relationships, the understanding of other people, the disclosure of the world, the self-disclosure made possible by a language—it is all this which shapes what we believe about Christ and his manifestation. The disclosure of the world, the seeing and showing of Christ in one another, are part of what we do, part of the way in which we define our lives; if we make radical changes in what we *do*, then we can only make them in terms of what we believe, while at the same time what we *do* affects what we believe.

The same line of thought holds true of the political reformists. It is supposed that reform must come about in terms, broadly speaking, of the kind of "democracy" we know in England or the USA. A kind of universal validity is given to the terms of such societies. The question that has to be asked is in fact rather different: if men are born into a series

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent account of this idea of men and their relationships, see Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, London 1961.

of complex relationships—if they are to be thought of, primarily, in terms of those relationships—then one has to ask whether the society into which people are born is organised in such a way as to allow for the greater development of the kind of relationships most calculated to achieve human fulfilment. For a Christian, this means commitment to the kind of society which will allow for the greatest possible manifestation of Christ in one another. This book is devoted to an analysis of the terms of such a commitment. The Christian mission is to be seen in terms of working for the transformation of the world into the kingdom of God. But we must not lose sight of the fact that it is *this* world we are called upon to transform—we have no other. We are not asked to think in terms of another world, another order; *this* is our world, and it is in the terms of *this* world that we must transform it. We must forget the system we have built of a separate church with its own laws and institutions (separatism of this kind is a sort of fear-response to the real situation) and see that the world God has created is good, and is where Christ is to be found. In the chapters which follow the reader will find a deeper working-out of the kind of way in which Christian thinking might go if we are to effect a revolution in the people of God which is part of the universal revolution going on around us.

I referred earlier to the convenience of dating the modern revolution from October 1917. My reasons for this are relatively simple. Despite the degeneration of the revolution in Soviet Russia, it remains that this was the first of a long series of socialist revolutions; we have yet to see whether in the light of other, later, revolutions it can redeem itself and recover something of its early value. But, of course, it is not only in the major political movements in the world that we can see the modern revolution taking place: Raymond Williams' book, *The Long Revolution*, is devoted to an analysis of the cultural revolution that is sweeping the world. He takes "culture" to mean that complex of relationships which form a society, as well as those elements within it which go towards enlarging the experience of a society in order that it may live and develop, and which we normally call works of art. In England key figures in this revolution would be Leavis, Wittgenstein, Williams himself, and a host of others, who have fought to show us a new way of looking at things and to provide the framework for a greater development of human relationships. This book is intended to help Christians to see what their humanist neighbours have already gone a long way towards discovering; that change to a better world, to a more human situation, must come about in socialist terms.



Frequent reference is made in the course of the book to what is sometimes described as "the Slant position", and as an alternative title we have called the book *Slant Manifesto*. This calls for some explanation. A little more than two years ago a group of undergraduates in Cambridge, with the help of some priests, decided that a periodical committed to a radical examination of the Roman Church and its ideas should be launched. They called it *Slant*. Its circulation was almost entirely confined to undergraduates, but its work, while suffering from the obvious problems of a periodical produced in students' limited spare time, was enormously valuable. So much was this so that the editors decided to put it on a national footing—to open its pages to a wider selection of authors, and to increase the number of issues. To this end they have put it in the hands of a publisher in sympathy with their work. Roughly speaking, the periodical—and the group which supports it—is engaged in the exploration of the idea that Christian commitment at the moment carries with it an obligation to be socialist. Some four years prior to the emergence of *Slant* another group of people—professional workers, university dons, and some priests—started an annual conference with much the same object in view. This group became known as the "December Group", because they met in the December of each year. The two groups have now

merged. It is more by accident than by design that nearly all the members of these groups are Roman Catholics, but because of the amount they owe to, among others, the *New Left Review* it is hoped that the basis of their membership will be widened. Exactly what "the Slant position" is should emerge with reasonable clarity by the time the reader has reached the end of this book.

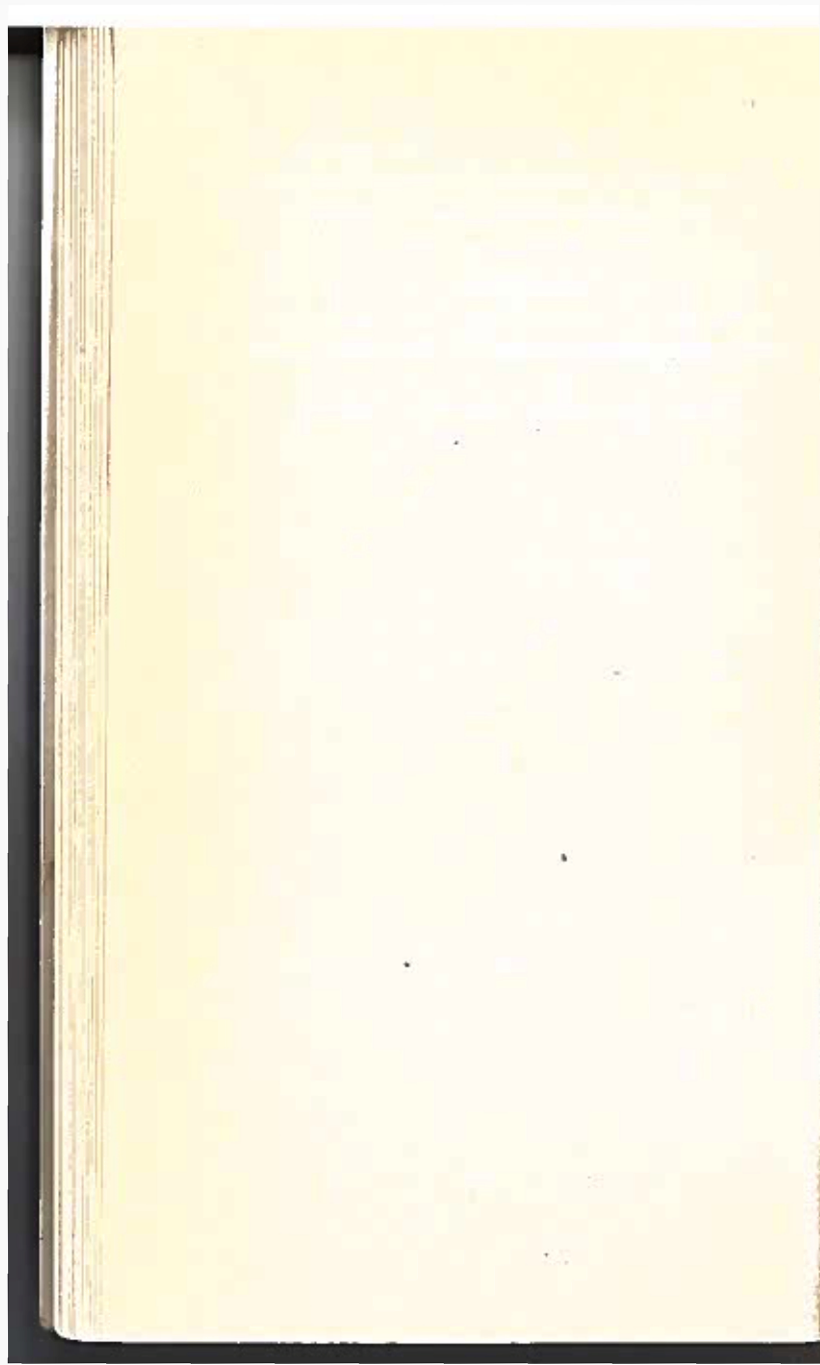
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PART 1

CHRISTIANS AGAINST CAPITALISM

*Adrian Cunningham and Terry Eagleton*



## Politics

Part 1 of this book introduces the connection between Christianity and politics which is examined historically and developed theologically in Parts 2 and 3. But even to introduce the connection immediately raises the first important question: Why should Christians be particularly concerned with politics, any more than with, say, anthropology or statistics or ancient history? And, if there is a special reason, why hasn't this been more evident in the past? Other fundamental objections can be raised against this connection; isn't there a danger, in discussing Christianity and politics, of making Christianity too much an affair of this world, of forgetting that as Christians we are destined for a different kind of life altogether, one in which politics and anthropology and statistics will all be equally superfluous?

We can try to answer these questions by describing more fully what we mean by "politics". Politics is the language in which we discuss the way men live together, in society; and since living

together in society is the normal human condition, by talking about politics we are talking about what it means to be a man, to be alive. All our experience is in this sense political; it has some relation to other men, to social reality. Politics is not only discussion of certain aspects of human behaviour—it is discussion of the structures and institutions which make a man what he is, for a man only comes into being through his society. Christ's teaching is political teaching, concerned with how men are to live together, not with man in isolation.

There may be an objection that this is an unfair use of the word "politics"—that we are weighting our case by giving it an inflated significance. The objection is understandable if we look at the way the term has been narrowed to mean merely the techniques of government, the detailed business of getting and preserving power. Politics has become a matter of the public world—the world beyond our private, intimate experience—and the relation between our closest values and beliefs, and the impersonal world of political manoeuvring has become increasingly difficult to make. The temptation is therefore to reject politics altogether as a specialised pursuit for the ambitious, and this is substantially what has happened in most Western societies today. "It's all politics", "politics is dirty", "I'm not politically-minded" are phrases which have become part of our conventional



wisdom. This kind of mental barrier can be best got over by seeing that this attitude is itself a deeply political one; if politics is reduced from a matter of ideology and human belief to a specialist profession, the reduction will benefit those who wish to keep their own, dominant, ideology from being questioned. When a Liberal or Labour or Conservative MP says that public ownership is a matter of efficiency (or inefficiency), not of "doctrine", he is making this kind of reduction.

This way of seeing politics, as a public matter divorced from our personal concerns, has a long tradition behind it, but it is not—even today—the only way of looking. To begin with, there are a good many people who would reject the idea that we can separate off our "public" from our "private" experience, and label the former as political, the latter as non-political. If we think about our actual experience of living in society, we realise that this kind of division will only hold as an abstraction. We are persons, individuals, because we are born into and shaped by a society whose language provides us with the terms within which we think and feel and act: we become individuals *through* the society. There is no such thing as wholly private experience: our most intimate experience is derived from the social reality of which we are a part. Our personal consciousness is not "given" *a priori*: it is shaped by the culture and language and

institutions of our society, and will change as these change. Our consciousness also creates and changes these institutions, of course, so the process is two-way, a mutual shaping. Our personal life is therefore not something to be set over against society; the way we think, the possibilities of experience open to us, are matters of the public world, the world of our society.

So politics is not a matter of techniques alone; it is sometimes made into this by men who fear the consequences of seeing politics in its deepest sense, as offering new ways of living together, new descriptions of what it means to be human. And this is why politics is important to Christians. Christianity, too, is concerned with how men live together—we all know this. What we do not recognise quite so often is that this, for Christians, is not a secondary thing, the ethical department of religion, something which comes after, and as a result of, loving God and sharing in the sacraments. We love God by loving each other, in the *act* of loving each other; Christ is present to us in so far as we are present to each other. We are saved, not by the intensity of our private love for God, nor by devotion to the sacraments or self-denial; we are saved by the degree to which we create community in the world.

There are different ways of creating community, of course, and the way which catholics have trad-

itionally recognised is by loving one's neighbour, acting lovingly to the people we know and meet. But community and relationship, in modern industrial society, involves more than this immediate personal contact. In an industrial society we are all intimately related to each other, even without knowing each other personally at all; we are related through institutions like organised work, through the mass-media and public services, through transport and cultural activities and the electoral system. What I do in my own life, in a factory, is part of a whole industrial process which relates me, indirectly, to all the other people in my society: I am present to them, in relationship with them. By writing these articles we are present to people we don't know, hoping to influence them. Our concern with being present to others in a loving way, therefore, must extend to include a whole society; we must learn to think of relationship in more than directly personal terms. These wider relationships, consisting of a whole society, are created through *institutions*—through legal, social, cultural, and economic structures. By changing these, we can change human relationships—and this, ultimately, is what politics is about.

So it is inadequate to think, as some catholics have tended to do in the past, of charity only as a personal quality, unorganised and spontaneous. Charity must indeed be spontaneous, but we have



to learn to visualise a charitable, spontaneous *society*, one which expresses, in its formal institutions, in factories and cinemas and local government chambers, the kind of loving life which we can see now in our personal relationships. Personal charity will produce charitable groups and activities, but will do nothing to change the structures and institutions of a society; it may, indeed, make the situation worse, by easing the inhuman results of these structures and thus diverting people's attention from their evil. The man who believes only in personal charity will tend to think that society will be healthy once all the individuals in it are kind to each other; he will fail to see that this personal kindness is an inadequate response to a society which, in its very structure—in the things which make it what it is—is dividing and degrading men. We need a language which can describe a whole society's life, and action which will change a whole society, as a single organism. And both of these are politics.

# 2

## Community

In the last chapter we described being a Christian as "creating community", and the word "community" will be at the centre of all our political and theological discussion; it is, indeed, the term which above all links theology to politics, translating what we say about Christianity into discussion of a whole society. In recent years, Christians have slowly returned to the recognition that the church is a community; this is no longer a radical or revolutionary concept for most of us. What is more revolutionary is to examine the implications of this concept for our political thinking. As members of the Christian community, we bring to the consideration of society an ideal of relationship between men which directly challenges many of the current notions. This is why we argue that, if Christians are really aware of what being part of the people of God means, they will be led logically to condemn vital aspects of capitalist society; they will need to be political radicals.

We believe, to begin with, that men can only



live properly in community; that it is membership of a community which makes a man fully human. We define and discover ourselves through each other: my personal reality, as an individual, is in a real way the property of my society, a commonly shared reality. My sense of identity is derived from society; I come into being, as a man, within society's terms. To be fully a man is to be fully in community with others. Community is not a secondary aspect of man's nature, a "faculty" like memory or a sense of humour; it is what constitutes his humanity—I am an individual to the extent that I discover myself as one through others. I discover myself in the process of helping to define and create a whole community; I see what I am as I deepen the community through my work, helping to sustain and nourish it.

These are difficult ideas, but we can understand them better if we look at two concrete examples of this process. One is language, the other is liturgy. Language is a social matter, as well as being my own personal possession—it is something which expresses the whole way of life of a society, a symbol of society's feelings and values and experience, and in learning to speak I am learning to make my own what is by nature a communal activity. Language is something beyond the individual, something into which he is born, as he is born into a physical society. Moreover, language does not

merely provide an individual with *means* to express his ideas and feelings, it provides him with the ideas and feelings themselves. This is one of the more important discoveries of modern philosophy: the fact that the individual can only experience within the terms of his language, and therefore within the terms of his society. The limits of my language are the limits of my life. To see a child learning to speak a language is to see a living image of an individual discovering himself within the terms of a society. Language does not just make my experience intelligible to others; it makes it intelligible to myself. It is language, the symbol of society, which makes me understand what I think and do and feel; and by understanding and expressing my own experience in language, I can contribute to extending and deepening my society's experience, helping to create new meanings. Language is a communal activity, a shared process of making and refreshing and scrapping meanings. We can see it, therefore, as an image of the kind of unity of person and society which, as Christians, we demand.

We demand this unity because it is this which grows out of the experience of the liturgy. In the liturgy we find, ideally, the same kind of closeness of relationship between individual and the whole body—"ideally", of course, because it is only recently that the Christian liturgy has begun to stop

looking like an obscure expressionist drama of foreign authorship and started to resemble the communal act that it is. The liturgy celebrates and creates community—the community which gives us a name and identity at baptism, the community to which Christ is sacramentally present. My own experience of Christ is derived from the community's experience of him; he is present to me not because I am personally devout, but simply because I am part of his community, inserted into his body.

A community, then, can be described as a number of men who bring each other into selfhood through shared and equal relationship; each sees his selfhood in terms of all the others, and his personal activity as a way of returning to the community what he has derived from it. Equality is necessary here because there can be no real relationship between men which is not an equal one. We shall discuss this further in talking about democracy later on. ("Democracy", of course, is the single term which sums up the description of community we have just given.) So this is the experience which we find in the liturgy, and which—this is the important point—we are to create in the world. It would be a mistake to think that the liturgy exists for its own sake, as an island of community in a rude, rough-spoken world, onto which we can scramble for relief. The church is



not there for Christians; it is there for the world. The community we create liturgically is pointless unless it is continually reaching beyond itself, extending to bring in all creation. The liturgy, then, is a political force—a force constantly working to transform human society into its own, communal image. Experience of the liturgy will mean that Christians will be instinctively hostile to any attempt to dilute the idea of community, to separate individual and society. Christians will have to reject the idea that society is a collection of free and autonomous individuals, each pursuing his own interests in his own way. They will recognise, with Karl Marx, that society is a sum-total, not of individuals, but of relationships—not men in isolation, but a dynamic whole.

Yet the whole foundation of western society, in this sense, contradicts what the liturgy tells us. The view of society as an open market in which men are the individual proprietors of themselves and their capacities is the dominant ideology of western capitalism; the idea of men as free individuals pursuing their own welfare is the idea of *laissez-faire*, the philosophy of capitalism. It is a philosophy which reflects and affirms an "atomised" society—one in which men see themselves as separate atoms or units, respecting each other's rights but colliding inevitably now and then. The opposed version of society is, simply, that of com-



munity—the view that men are most Christlike when they are co-operating and not competing when they are bound together, not fragments.

Many conservatives, of course, would argue that they, too, see co-operation and community as valuable ideals—the most capitalistic society in the world, the USA, probably uses the term “community” more commonly than any other nation. Conservatives (that is, those who support capitalism) will talk of creating a common spirit in a factory or on the sportsfield—of managers and men, officers and privates, working together in close harmony. The radical would reply with the same attitude he would use to reject the idea of personal charity<sup>1</sup>; he would say that as long as society, in its very socio-economic structure, actively prohibits real co-operation, dividing man from man, then any talk of creating community is merely superficial. The facts of possessive individualism are there in the very bones of western society; and it is here that attention must be focussed.

This, of course, is a highly controversial kind of analysis. The incredible conclusion of all this, if it is true, is that Christians can never be conservatives or liberals or even right-wing socialists; they must fight capitalism as evil; they must align themselves, perhaps, with all those traditional enemies

<sup>1</sup> See the discussion in chapter 1, “Politics”, above, pp. 3-8.

of the church, left-wing socialists and atheistic Marxists. Can this really be what it means to be a Christian? We must explore this further by considering more closely the nature of work, and the nature of capitalism.

# 3

## Work

It might easily be thought that work was just one among many aspects of human activity. But this is not in fact so. Work is not just one aspect of a man among many; it is, or should be, a central part of what he is. It is easy, after our discussion of community, to see why this is so; work is the activity which relates a man to his society, the particular way in which he strengthens and confirms his society, and in turn receives back personal life. A man must be able to discover himself in the work he does—this is what we mean by saying that work must be “creative”. He must also be able to discover a satisfying relationship to a whole society; the work must not only be useful, but must give him a real and active sense of being part of a community. Work has, therefore, the two-fold function of expressing what a man is, and what he is in relation to society; but ideally, as we have seen, these two will be one—what the man is, expressed in his creative discovery of himself through work, will be what he is within society, how he is a part of the

community. We can see this happening at a very simple level: a craftsman makes a bowl and in doing so finds creative self-expression; but the bowl is a social thing, a contribution to society, and the craftsman's self-discovery is, therefore, not the experience of himself as a lone, individual artist, but as a member of this society.

Any discussion of work in modern capitalist society is made difficult by the fact that it is not easy to see how far a sense of futility and meaninglessness (which is quite obviously a common experience of work in this society) is attributable to the specifically capitalist nature of the society, and how far it is inherent in the fact of industrialism itself. What is obvious, however, is that even when this second source of futility is reduced by methods which demand more active skill and control from the workers, a sense of meaninglessness still remains which can only be attributed to the capitalist structure of work: to the fact that, despite even a high degree of personal responsibility and initiative in the actual work-processes, the worker is still unable to find himself in his work because it is work for another's profit, not work for the community. The deepest source of uncreative work in our society is this sense of alienation, on the part of the worker, from the whole work-process in which he is involved, a process ultimately beyond his control. No matter how much personal creative



energy the worker expends, he feels that the product of this energy does not belong to him; it becomes part of a system which is beyond him, a system in which he is passively caught up, without any active participation. The more personally creative the actual work, the more he is liable to feel the contradiction between this sense of immediate significance, and the ultimate lack of personal significance of the whole work-activity.

Christians should be particularly concerned about work, because for them work ought to be creative in a special sense. Work is the way I am personally involved in Christ's redemption of the world—the way I personally further and make effective that redemption in transforming creation, bringing it within the control of the human community. The work of the architect and the mechanic, as well as the work of the scientist and literary critic, are ways of understanding and transforming nature: to understand something is to some extent to transform it, to bring it within the range of human meanings and give it human significance. Before the redemption things were brute and meaningless, insubordinate to human control, but now Christ, through his cross, has gained kingship and mastery over all things; he is reconciling all creation to himself through us, through our work.

All this suggests an idea of work quite different from the one we commonly find in our society. It

suggests, for instance, that work is a way of reducing and abolishing human alienation from nature, a way of extending human kingship over the world, a celebration of human energy. Work is thus a valuable activity in itself; it is not simply a tiresome necessity in order to live. It is, moreover, the activity of a community—an activity which should create and affirm community. This is what is implied by the idea of work as the Christian sees it, work as a way of belonging to the community of Christ and representing that community in the world.

It is not difficult to see that this idea of work is a long way from the reality of work in capitalist society. In this society, work is seen primarily as a means towards personal acquisition, not as a creative self-expression or an affirmation of community, and it is part of the nature of capitalist structures that this should be so. Work in a capitalist factory is co-operative only in the most negative possible sense of the term. The workers are united in the same work-process, but united only as individuals, each of whom needs to gain a wage; what active sense of community actually occurs is quite marginal to the capitalist conception of work, which sees community and co-operation, not as ends of themselves, but as ways of ensuring a better profit. Far from work being felt as a way of reducing human alienation, work under capitalism actually

strengthens this alienation, as we have seen, by dividing the worker from the results of his work, taking up his personal product into a system and a market beyond his control. Work under capitalism divides community rather than affirms it: capitalist is divided from capitalist, each in fierce competition with the other; capitalist and worker are divided, and the workers themselves are split up in an individualist concern with their own livelihood over against that of others. The idea of common responsibility is attacked at its very root by the capitalist mode of work; the human energy which should find full and rich expression in working to build community and abolish alienation is diverted and narrowed into a pursuit of mere personal acquisition.

How then is work to be made more creative in our society? How is it to be revolutionised so that we can recognise in it the kind of redemptive quality which we believe it to have? It is evident, first of all, that we must support all the efforts towards reducing those destructive aspects of the work-process which arise from the nature of industrial production itself; we must explore ways of reducing monotony and routine, of introducing skill and active control and variety wherever this is possible. This means a concern with all the techniques of automation which are already indicating a quite changed future for industrial society, techniques which can involve intelligent participation



in work, not mere passivity. But it would actually worsen the destructive effects of work if the worker were to experience this intelligent participation within a system which continued to deny him the creative fulfilment of participation in its actual overall management and control; for the contrast between the creative local participation and the overall alienation would be a deep source of tension.

The only final answer to the problem of work in industrial society seems to be workers' control of industry itself, the granting of full and democratic government over industry to the people who work in it. If this were to happen, the worker would no longer experience that kind of alienation which arises from the sense of his powerlessness in the face of the system; and the system, created by men to satisfy human needs, would be returned into the human control and shaping of those for whom it is maintained. Within this context, work may still be trivial or routine, though every effort would be made to change this; but routine and monotonous work is more tolerable within a system of which one is an active part than in the capitalist system. A housewife's work is often very severe and monotonous, but it can gain significance from the whole context in which it is done, the context of family love and care—her work proclaims and creates community.



To talk about workers' control of industry raises more acutely the whole question of capitalism, and it is this which we must go on to examine more closely.

# 4

## Capitalism

To discuss capitalism at all with any critical depth is difficult, because although it is primarily rooted in the structure and relationships of the work-process, the kind of thinking we bring to bear upon the subject is itself shot through with capitalist conceptions. The paradox of capitalism is that it is simultaneously an assault on the essentially communal nature of human life, and in itself a total condition of life, an ideology and culture that has sunk deep roots into our society. It is the very completeness and opaqueness of capitalism which constitutes the problem—its ability to mute, absorb, and transform criticism is the ground of its strength.

We have already seen how capitalism denies the communal nature of man's existence, in its very structures; it is a system which places men in mutual antagonism, taking human competition as its dominant emphasis, and through this creating a class-society where human interests are sharply opposed in the routines of daily life. Capitalism envisages society as a neutral area within which

individuals may compete in the private acquisition of wealth and property, and the result of this securing of ownership by one section of the people—the section Marx called the “bourgeoisie”—is the formation of a society overwhelmingly composed of wage-earners who are deprived of any full participation in society. Capitalism thus denies community, dividing capitalist from capitalist, capitalist from worker, and worker from worker; at every level in society, the principles of individual acquisition, competition, and private possessiveness become active. The majority of the people are alienated from control over their own lives—they are the “consumers”, the passive recipients of wages, new brands of food, television programmes. Men come to regard their labour, and themselves, as commodities to be sold on the market; more and more of human energy is forced into the one activity of material acquisition; less and less of the crucial decisions and operations in society are within the control of the people themselves. The basic inequality of material possession arising directly from capitalist structures, creates a whole superstructure of inequality, distinction, privilege and exploitation in common social life; men come to see themselves as private beings, proprietors of their own existence, finding individual definition in opposition to, rather than through, others.

It is difficult, as we have said, to criticise capitalism, because part of its structure is to generate confusion about the real nature of its own activities. It is this which Marx called "mystification". The first major attempt to "place" capitalism, by seeing it as a totality from the outside, was Marx's, and the essence of this achievement is his historical method. By setting capitalism in historical perspective, he stripped it of its quality of inevitability and completeness, showing it merely as one possible form of society among others. But this approach, while permanently valuable, is not in itself sufficient, for despite key insights to the contrary the part of Marx's work which has shaped the dominant Marxist tradition was marked by the narrowness of vision of its time. The present time is one of great hope, because, just as Christianity is being re-explored and re-defined, so socialism is being deepened and extended from a historical economic analysis to a whole philosophical, psychological, and human vision. A political movement like the New Left in Britain has concerned itself with the values, experience, and feelings underlying capitalism, and in doing so has re-defined a kind of socialist humanism—a socialism which is living and responsive, not merely an economic or social blueprint.

Since Marx's analysis, capitalism has undergone profound transformation, and any radical assault



must take account of this. The obvious conflicts and barbarities of its early phases are less evident, and so are the obvious points of attack. If it was ever true that the inexorable sharpening of social tensions would in itself produce a social revolution, it is no longer so. The dense complexity of capitalist society is specious, but effective. Like the fog in Dickens' *Bleak House*, it has coherence and unity only in a negative sense—but even the appearance of unity can be mystifying. The body of men working in a factory have coherence and identity, but mainly in terms of the minimal, negative unity imposed by common subjection to an alien process of work; they are related separately but positively to their common object, but only negatively to one another, each member being interchangeable with the next. There is no centre to the group, only a series of separate human beings, a multiplicity of centres, a random collection of human purposes.

The aggressive individualism of earlier capitalism, with identifiable owners and centres of exploitation, has been transformed into a bureaucracy; the enormous, faceless corporations, multiple holding companies, and complex cross-investing of today. With this movement towards intricacy and anonymity at the top, there have developed similar changes throughout the system, in the development of a meritocratic managerial class, professional administrators, and clerical staffs. At

the same time, capitalism has managed to negotiate the cyclical crises of booms and slumps without fundamentally changing its exploitative character. We see this in the long-term planning of investments, greater government intervention, marketing boards, employers' associations, and, on the international level, monetary funds and the Common Market. Welfare services have also meant a change, and in fulfilling their essential, humanitarian role they have also to some extent disguised the actual issues in the socio-economic structures themselves.

Capitalism, to defend itself, has developed a technique of "mystification", of disguising actual issues, which the radical must be alive to. A threat to imperialism is translated into a threat to "our" oil, "our" rubber, and not that of Shell or Dunlop. The capitalist press speaks of strikers "holding the community to ransom", whereas in fact the class whose views it represents can only exist by doing precisely this *all* the time. When the real conflict between worker and employer comes to the surface, the "community" image is invoked to maintain the original, unequal relationship; calls for "loyalty" and "common interest" blur the actual incompatibility of interests. In many ways, capitalist society only holds together by practising this mystification, and preventing people from seeing what actually is going on, in a whole situation.

People are divided in themselves in their view of society: as ratepayers they protest at an increase in rates, but as users of public services they complain at their inadequacy due to lack of money.

A concept like "the masses" is another instance of mystification used by capitalism to maintain itself. We are taught to see others as part of "the masses", but the ludicrousness of this is evident in the fact that they, too, see us as "masses". "Masses" are other people. By seeing people in this generalised way, we can accept the idea that they are stupid, ignorant, incapable of controlling their own lives, and thereby confirm the capitalist status quo. In the argument as to whether people can control their own lives, each man draws the line in front of his own feet: "of course *I* can, but the others . . ." "The masses" who cannot, it is supposed, control their own lives, are a mystification, constantly retreating before analysis—at once everywhere, and nowhere.

Another important mystification is the idea of "leisure"—an exercise in worry on the part of those who have leisure about those who don't have it, and about what they will do with it if they get it, which has supplanted the worry about how the lower orders will react to education, and which also neatly evades the more relevant problem of work. Leisure can be safely contained within the present social structure, but changes in work would



undercut it. It is changes in work which may well form the next advance against capitalism; for the complexity of modern work-processes demands from the worker an extending participation and control in the work itself, but he is still denied the kind of total control over the whole system which can be attained in some socialist countries by the institution of "workers' control"<sup>1</sup>. The result of the worker's present complex participation could therefore be a greater general control. Capitalism is now geared to the granting of periodic wage increases, and can do this without threatening its own existence; but the struggle for control and autonomy in work itself strikes at the root of the system. The movement in trade-unionism from *representation* through elected officials to freely chosen shop-steward delegates on specific mandate, directly responsible to the body of workers and governed by their decisions, is the kind of radical democratisation which challenges management and older union thinking alike.

All these are ways of recognising capitalism as it exists now, as a contemporary phenomenon: the radical challenge must confront its complexity, its mystifying self-justifications, its appearance of inevitable rationality, its influence on our own deepest modes of thinking. But the drives behind our rejection of capitalism remain, essentially, those

<sup>1</sup> See chapter 7, "Directions", below, pp. 46-52.



behind the long tradition of protest which has come through to us from Carlyle, Arnold, Ruskin, Morris, and D. H. Lawrence. It is the "base forcing of all human energy into a competition of mere acquisition" (Lawrence) that, as Christians and humanists, we reject; it is the fragmentation of community, the alienation of a people from themselves, the reduction of creative processes to futility. We can understand these pressures better if we go on to look at one idea which has been, recently, the centre of the anti-capitalist case: the idea of culture.

# 5

## Culture

Somebody once said, referring to the development of socialist ideas in Britain since 1956, that the socialist argument was now no longer about economics, but about culture. The real truth, of course, is that socialism is always about both; it is about a whole way of life (which is one meaning of "culture"), and about the economic structures which shape that life and are part of it. But the emphasis is a useful one—socialism is not just a more efficient way of running society, it is about men and their relationships with each other. And these are matters which can be said to be "cultural" in the widest sense, about the quality of a whole way of life.

The word "culture" has come to have two chief meanings, and we have to look at them both, and then at the relationship between them. Culture means a body of artistic and intellectual work of agreed value, and the process of making and responding to this work; it can also mean the whole way of life of a people, their characteristic institu-

tions and activities, the things which make them a distinctive society. The anthropologist talks about primitive cultures, using the term in this way.

Why then has socialism been so concerned with the idea of culture over the past ten years? One answer to this is that capitalism, as we suggested in the last article, has changed to a point where some of the older charges against it are no longer as relevant as they were, but where in their place we can bring other, equally damning criticisms. Capitalism, faced with the demands of a powerfully organised working-class movement, has had to make certain basic concessions; it can no longer get away with allowing starvation or brutality or massive unemployment, as it has done often in the past. But in the very process of satisfying certain basic material needs, it has become clear that capitalism is thwarting other, equally vital needs. In creating a materially satisfying society, and appealing to this material satisfaction for its own self-justification, it has denied the kinds of fulfilment which can be broadly called cultural, and has indeed proved hostile to imaginative and creative expressiveness of most kinds. Capitalism, in its single-minded concern with profit, ignores and represses the human feeling and energy which find expression in the arts; these become side-shows in capitalist society, since the qualities of human life they embody are not supposed, by the dominant

utilitarian philosophy, to have anything to do with the real business of living, the business of acquisition. Of course the arts have their particular place in capitalist society, but as an escape from living, not a model for it; they provide a means of relaxation, a harmless entertainment for men whose real concern is with profit.

The socialist, especially the kind of socialist connected with the New Left, sees culture, the arts, as being at the centre of any description of what it means to be alive, and therefore at the centre of the socialist case. The arts express the kind of creative human energy which we want to see actively embodied in the structures and relationships of a whole society; they offer a prototype for feelings and values and kinds of relatedness, as the liturgy does—and like the liturgy they cannot be seen as existing in themselves, but only as transforming forces in a society. A society which saw work, for instance, in the way we outlined in the third chapter, would be a *cultured* society, one where the ordinary processes of social life would express the kind of living we can locate now in the arts. In this way, we begin to see the crucial connection between the two definitions of culture: the qualities we discover in culture (the arts) must somehow be translated into the qualities of a culture (a whole way of life).

A society where the drive towards acquisition is



dominant will tend to be characterised by cultural impoverishment, and this is clearly true of Britain today. The quality of our common life is shaped to a great extent by the mass-media, which are the official arts of modern industrial society, but we all know that much of the work of these media is trivial, debasing, and harmful. It is not enough, however, to campaign for cleaner television: we must recognise the root causes of this cultural trivialisation, and we find them in the capitalistic structure of the mass-media themselves.

The media are dominated by capitalistic ideology: they are business concerns, whose primary interest, like that of all such concerns, is in making as large a profit as possible, and who plan and produce their artistic material with this consideration uppermost. The mass-media, to survive as business concerns, must reach as large an audience as possible, as quickly as possible, and to do this they appeal deliberately to the lowest common denominator of taste, emptying their material of challenging or complex elements and reducing it to a light, undemanding diet which prompts an instant and superficial response. To ensure an audience of millions for their advertisers, the commercial television companies fight shy—at peak viewing hours, anyway—of any material much more taxing than the quiz-show and the western. In doing this, the mass-media are exploiting and

reinforcing the lack of education of ordinary people; by taking advantage of uneducated taste, they confirm people in their superficial responses and prohibit the growth of any genuine response altogether. The descendants of the people who were physically exploited by nineteenth-century capitalism and deprived of education, are now having their lack of education exploited in a new way with equally crippling results.

The mass-media work in very closely with the whole pattern of capitalist society. In both factory and cinema, the worker is treated as a passive, uncritical recipient, alienated from active control or criticism. The mass-media supply him in a cheap way with the kinds of escapism and light entertainment which the pressures of trivial work drive him to; they offer fantasy and fake feeling as a substitute for the real fulfilment which he lacks in his normal life under capitalism. The mass-media therefore underpin capitalism: they confirm the worker in his passivity and alienation, and act as a safety-valve for his disruptive desires and emotions. They also feed him the kinds of social values and responses which result in acceptance of the capitalist status quo. It is quite clear, for instance, how much advertising is a part of the whole acquisitive, competitive ethos of capitalism, with its insistence on social status, its exploitation of feelings of inferiority and confusion, its debasement

of sex to a commodity which can be bought and sold.

Through the mass-media, then, people are being brutalised and trivialised in quite the same way they were brutalised by early capitalism; they are deprived of any chance of rich imaginative living, denied a genuine sense of value. The mass-media mediate the dominant reality of capitalist society to the people, and are beyond popular control; they demand submission to their own version of the world, and stunt the kind of critical response which could challenge this version effectively. By acting to change the ownership of the mass-media, to disentangle them from capitalistic structures, as Raymond Williams suggests in the final section of his *Penguin Special Communications*, we are implicitly challenging the whole structure of our society. For just as capitalist control of the mass-media results in an impoverished quality of life, so capitalist control of industry leads to a similar debasement of human feeling and energy. In both cases men are alienated from control over their own lives; they are denied full creative satisfaction; they are exploited as passive objects for another's profit. To see that the *Daily Tabloid* is a bad, dangerous newspaper is to see that capitalism is a bad, dangerous system; what happens over the years to the imaginative and critical life of *Daily Tabloid* readers happens all the time to men who



work passively in factories, at processes over which they have no control, with no sense of community or personal creativity. It is no answer to say that these men would have been like this anyway; the point is that they have not been allowed to be anything different, and are actively shaped to respond superficially.

Christians have a particular interest in the movement towards a cultured society, because critical and imaginative sensitivity is implicit in the whole process of responding to and becoming part of the Christian faith and the liturgy; to be a Christian involves being cultured, in a basic sense of the term, open to all kinds of life and capable of full and critical response. In looking for a Christian society we are looking, not for a society where 90% or even 9% of the people go to mass on Sundays: we are looking for a society where the genuine personal openness which the experience of culture can provide has been generalised to the level of a whole way of life.



# 6

## Liberalism

No study of capitalist society is complete without a study of liberalism, for now, in the British middle-classes and at several other levels to a lesser degree, liberalism is a very common mode of feeling, demanding a new kind of critical response. It is one of the most difficult attitudes of mind to engage with in capitalist society, for it has the qualities of capitalism in their highest and most respectable form. It has the same resilience, assurance, and quiet certainty of its own inevitable rightness, along with a confusing, deferential admittance of its own weakness, in which honesty is felt to be an adequate substitute for the seeking of remedies. Liberalism is an attitude especially embedded in the university environment and in education generally, and because of this it can be a potent force; liberal values are part of our own background, and the self-deprecating sense of doubt, the paralysing sense of anguish at the apparent failure of these values, draw a direct human response.

For this reason above all, it is vital to see that these values are not in fact universal excellences of human nature, but the characteristics of a particular section of capitalist society. "Intelligence", "concern for personal relationships", "discrimination", "disinterestedness", are not self-sufficient terms: they represent a concern for a limited range of personal feelings and relationships, and a kind of detachment which even at its most appealing—in John Stuart Mill, for instance—works within a set of assumptions and prejudices which can never be the object of the disinterestedness they sustain. Liberal values operate in an area of freedom and leisure, behind the nasty reality of capitalism, and the indirectness of the link—private incomes, investments, privileged education, the old-boy network, university posts—conceals the fact that the liberal, leisured class is dependent on the exclusion from these things of the vast majority of the people. The one thing upon which disinterestedness cannot play is the economic-exploitative basis of disinterestedness—its own very definite interest, its socially biased position. As Robert Frost ironically put it, a real liberal would have to be too liberal to be a liberal.

This is the basic contradiction of liberalism: that its intellectual independence is the product of social exploitation; its disinterestedness is blind to its own nature, and its posture of continual worried

introspection is not allowed to probe beyond values to facts. Because of this contradiction there must always be a "crisis" of liberal culture, for part of the liberal stance is a diffusion of its own values throughout society as a whole, and this is a self-defeating project; the values themselves can only exist within a leisured class. This is the root of the liberal dilemma from Arnold to the "more means less" school of educational thought; liberal values must reach their limit in a fog of hesitation and self-searching, for to push any further would be to undercut their own basis. The dilemma is of long standing, but so long as new members of the leisured class could be absorbed through the universities, and liberals could feel that it was possible to divorce the teaching of values from the economic framework within which alone they can exist in education, the position was just tenable.

This is no longer the case; the diffusion of university education is rapidly outstripping the number of places available in the leisured class, and the failure of liberal values extended beyond their own class-basis is unarguable in the schools. Liberalism has served merely to obscure the real class-issue, to act as a mystifying force. The smart, up-to-date classlessness of a paper like the *Observer* conceals its very real, fundamental commitment to the capitalist status quo; and statements like "I'm not very interested in all these social distinctions" and



"Don't you think all this class-stuff is a bit out of date?" typify the liberal response, and have become part of our conventional wisdom—automatic attitudes. Actually to look at, say, the statistics for property-ownership in Britain (1% of the population owns 43% of the fixed property) is to advance to the kind of position where the liberal cannot follow. Liberalism has run to a dead end; it can either be absorbed into the synthetic world it has helped to create, or make the unlikely transition to socialism.

This kind of fundamentally impotent liberalism has become a dominant mode of thinking in the renewal which is now going on in the Catholic Church, and an awareness of its limitations is therefore all the more urgent for catholics. On the part of the hierarchy, liberalism takes its usual anti-political form—the form of an appeal not to use political "labels" in reference to the church, an assertion that the church is independent of politics. The appeal, in other words, is still to a specious disinterestedness, for in capitalist society, as we have seen in our first discussion, to stand still or aloof is to ratify the status quo, and thus, objectively, to support capitalism; this kind of independence is itself a political attitude, in mystified form. On the part of the progressives, lay and clerical, there appears to be a great drive towards change and reform, but always within liberal



limits, and within, largely, the limits of the church itself; the reformist energy is spent on minor abuses, or on interior matters (ecumenism, liturgical reform, etc.). Of course a matter like ecumenism is never *wholly* interior, in the sense that it has general consequences in the world; but it, and other topics, have absorbed a great deal of self-consciously "progressive" energies which have often stopped short of seeing the consequences of renewed Christianity as a revolutionised society, except in a vague and ill-defined way. The inherently self-defeating nature of the liberal position and the anguished sense of failure are perfectly exemplified in the debates on the morality of war: these are either conducted with great energy in the abstract realms of natural law and just war theory, or, as a slight advance on this, in terms of international institutions like the UN or personal protest and "change of heart". The point is that *all* these attitudes completely evade the social issues involved in war, and the necessity of political action within, as well as between, states. The interrelation of war and a permanent war-economy, and, ultimately, of exploitation, violence, and divisiveness in war and in the structures of capitalism, is frequently missed.

Another example of liberal thinking, this time in opposition to other, more formal capitalist ideas, is the idea of society as a family. This is very com-

mon in catholic social teaching, and again needs to be scrutinised. The capitalist image of society, as we have seen, is of the market, and this can provide a total description of all social and cultural phenomena in society. It can only be opposed by a similarly all-embracing image; and the idea of society as an indefinitely extended family is such an image. It is the universality of the image, and its implicit opposition to capitalist values, which makes it so difficult to recognise it for what it is. When used with genius by a writer like Dickens, it can provide a thorough-going rejection of the inhumanity of capitalism, and yet, as with all liberal protest, remain fundamentally within the same system. For the family is at once a basic form of human community, and a system of subtly graded levels of authority and deference across which affection and respect extend in an immediacy of contact. But to use this as an analogy of society, although exposing the lack of community in capitalist society, is to reduce all problems—as is often truly the case in a family—to individual change of heart, and to accept the structures of class and authority as naturally as those of parents and children, nephew and uncle, provided they are infused (as in the family) with love and generosity. In this way, the system can be attacked while remaining quite intact; the image of the family provides a basis for attack on a society's lack of love,

but ironically reinforces the sense of authority, structured and unequal relationship, paternalism and individual generosity.

The dangers of this kind of thinking within the church are also obvious. What may well be happening, in much "progressive" thought, is the replacement of the image of the church as a rigid and authoritarian society, with the image of the church as a family, with a loving father (or a number of them) at the head. But this may in fact be to escape from one kind of trap into another all the more insidious for being more immediately acceptable; for the question is not whether we prefer a loving to a cruel father, but whether, in church and society, the implications of fatherhood make the image of a father desirable at all. The question, in the context of Christianity, is complicated by the inherently hierarchical structure of the church in a theological sense, but much of our objection to liberal paternalism in society will also apply to particular modes of feeling and acting within the church. The alternative to trivialisation in mass-media is not paternalist censorship but political and educational change; the alternative to employer-worker hostility in industry is not (as with much modern American and British industry) the transformation of a firm into a family with a kindly management, but equal, democratic control and co-operation; the alternative to imperialism is not

kindly colonial administration, but self-government. The liberal pressure towards "solving" a structural problem by personal kindness must be resisted as mystification, which, in the long run, only worsens the problem in trying, feebly, to improve it. Whether paternalism is this, or whether it is a calculated means of disabling criticism and preserving the status quo, the radical must always identify it for what it is, and oppose it.



## Directions

By "directions" we mean "ways forward", not "orders". This is the distinction we have first of all to make, in coming to the end of a discussion of ideas and wondering how to carry the discussion further. Whatever the ways forward are, it is a matter of pointing and exploring, not of dictation. This is one of the most valuable facts about the socialist movement in Britain which we have already referred to as the New Left—the movement which came into existence in 1956, after Hungary and Suez, and which centred on a review (the *New Left Review*) which concerned itself with deepening the meaning of socialism, defining a true socialist humanism. New Left socialism of this kind is largely exploratory: it begins from the kind of ideas we have explored in this section, and asks what kind of society, in practical detail, should grow out of them. The point is that it poses questions, and struggles towards answers, without recourse to the rule-book; there can be no rule-book, clearly, in creating a whole culture. This lack of

dogma is one of the reasons why an exploratory socialism ought to be attractive to Christians; for Christians, too, are concerned with what is human, and therefore flexible and living, never with legalism or stereotyped formulae. The New Left came into existence partly as a reaction against a kind of socialism which had hardened in just that way, replacing human energy with rigid categories, static models of society. In joining with this kind of thinking, Christians are taking the world a move further from the old law, deeper into the new creation of love, where all the deepest realities have to be played by ear.

But playing by ear doesn't mean vagueness or compromise. The New Left reacted against certain crude types of dogmatic Marxism, but it fought equally against the kind of socialism which is socialist in name only, which abandons all idea of creating a radically new society and opts instead for a slightly modified capitalism. This kind of socialism can be seen most obviously in the British Labour Party. There are still genuine socialists in the Labour Party, men fully committed to the idea of creating real community; but for the most part, at present, this is a compromising party, willing to accept capitalism and try, feebly, to work within it, patching and repairing some of the human damage.

What is a Christian radical to do in this situa-

tion? We go back to the theme which has run through these discussions: the Christian is pledged to creating community, and no community can exist where capitalism dominates society. We have seen the reasons for this, seen how capitalism fragments community, debases the meaning of work and culture, cripples basic human energies, stunts the growth of full participation and responsibility. In this situation, a politics of half-measure is clearly inadequate: the disease is rooted in the structures of our society, and only revolutionised structures will bring health.

The present situation in Britain for the radical is difficult and confused. There seem few immediate creative opportunities for action open; British society seems given over, for the foreseeable future, to capitalism, whether the system is operated by a Conservative, Liberal, or Labour Party. We can perhaps make a marginal improvement by supporting the Labour Party, which is, after all, still nominally committed to the common ownership of the means of production; under strong enough pressure, it is possible that the Labour Party may be moved further towards this goal, and then beyond it, to schemes of workers' control of industry. In the present situation, therefore, the Labour Party is to be supported; it is of all parties the one nearest to the radical's aims. But support, at the moment, has to be qualified by awareness that the

half-measure the Labour Party is committed to in practice will never be adequate—full community can only be reached by the common ownership and *management* of industry, and this, at present, seems very far distant.

What can be fostered, however, is a continual, creative criticism and scrutiny of capitalism, and an exploration of alternative ways of life. The traditional Marxist solution to capitalism is total state-ownership of industry. This would certainly mean that industry was owned by the people through the state, but such a system can all too easily produce a dangerously centralised, bureaucratic society. What is needed is some way of creating the kind of whole, united society which this pattern of common ownership can give, without the dangers of over-centralisation. What is needed, also, is a realisation that common ownership of the means of production is not in itself enough; it is management and control of the work-process and the whole society, by the people who are themselves involved in it, which alone can be the satisfying solution for the radical. Socialism, therefore, means full democracy—the greatest degree of participation by everyone in social processes. The two chief ways in which this can be achieved are a greater sharing at every level by all people in political decisions and policy-making, and workers' control of industry. Both of these seem quite



feasible measures. It would not be difficult, with the kinds of technological skills now available in collecting and recording information, to open political decisions to the vote of a whole society, and to ensure, at local, regional and national levels, the possibility of full democracy; and again, workers' control schemes are in operation in other countries at present, and seem to have had some measure of success. Workers' control of industry would bring all the decisions and operations of work directly into the control and responsibility of those who are involved in the work itself, and would thus establish a full democracy in industry, with shared and co-operative decision-making. What has to be avoided, however, is the possibility of further fragmenting society by operating schemes of workers' control within an entirely decentralised society, and some syndicalist and anarchist programmes of social change seem to err in this direction. It seems obvious, in our own society, that any large amount of decentralisation is impossible, and perhaps undesirable, if it serves merely to divide society up into smaller communities. The problem again, is to find some way of reconciling the essential unity of a socialist society with the degree of independent autonomy essential for men if they are to be fully responsible in their actual work-processes—to avoid the twin errors of massive, Stalinist centralisation and

dictatorship on the one side, and extreme anarchism on the other.

The result of really radical change of this kind would be the creation of a genuinely Christian society—one which acted by the ethic of co-operative equality, of shared and active responsibility. As catholics, we believe that we have an especial need to consider ideas of this kind, in view of the often quite inadequate official social teaching of the church. Many papal encyclicals have condemned capitalism, but in considering socialism they have confined themselves often so exclusively to particular kinds of atheistic Marxism-Leninism that their comments have sometimes had little relevance to other kinds of socialism. What Christians, and catholics above all, can do, is to be open to ideas of this kind: to realise that "social teaching" which comes in ready-made categories, with its lists of abstract rights and duties and its frequently unsociological use of crucial terms, is not enough to face the demands of a complex industrial society, where others, if not Christians, are moving beyond the stock responses to new and deeper insights into what human society could be.

We said, at the beginning of our discussion of capitalism, that capitalist attitudes are deeply rooted in us all, and this is indeed true; those who have found themselves reacting with instinctive distaste to some of the ideas in this section may

well ask themselves whether, in reacting this way, they are not confirming our cause rather than questioning it. Christians need at the moment to learn constantly from what non-Christians are thinking and saying about politics and society: then, perhaps, they can start, at a later point, to make a real contribution. We have written this section to suggest a starting-point for discussion; the Christian contribution to renewing the face of the earth could still, after all, be the decisive one.

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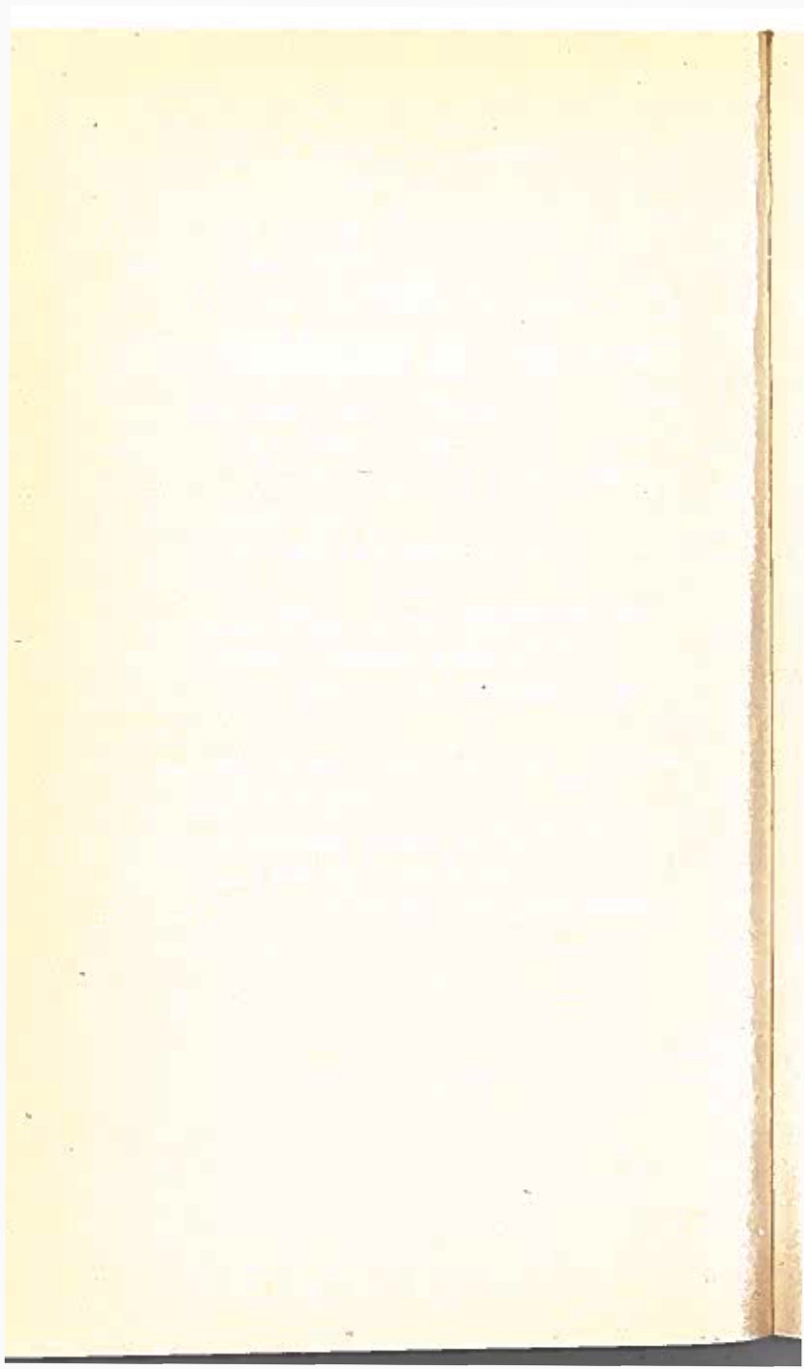
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## **PART 2**

### **THE CAUSES OF THE PRESENT CRISIS**



# 8

## The roots of the Christian crisis/*Terry Eagleton*

It is a symptom of the need for renewal in Christian social thinking that we have no single, adequate, interpretative account of the relationship between the church and the social developments of the industrial revolution over the last one and a half centuries in Britain. This lack of historical knowledge means that much of our present theorising about Christian responses to industrial capitalism has necessarily to be done in a void; we can take over and assimilate non-Christian methods and ideas, and examine the consequences of a renewed theology on political attitudes, but to relate our whole situation as Christian radicals in the 1960s to a continuous tradition is less easy. This chapter is meant as a general outline of three aspects of nineteenth-century attitudes in Christian and social thinking: from here it may be easier to go on to a deeper insight into the possibilities of a contemporary Christian radicalism.



### 1. *Liberal contradiction*

The history of the relationship between the Christian church and the working class over the last century reveals a deep-seated contradiction in attitude which can be seen as a particular intensification of a general liberal crisis in British society. In the nineteenth century, the church was urgently concerned to make real contact with the working class, but the motive behind its concern was necessarily ambivalent: it was partly a genuine and devoted anxiety for the welfare of the people, partly an anxiety for its own welfare and survival as an institution. In almost every expression of concern at the failure of Christianity made by churchmen in the last century, these two elements, the positive and the negative feeling, combined to create an ambiguous stance towards the working class, in which the negative strain could frequently qualify the positive concern to a point where sympathy was alienated. A vicious circle was then set up, as anxiety at evident failure intensified the self-interest and caused distortions in further appeals to working men. Self-interest, whether conscious or not, was inevitably built in to any campaign to win popular support, and the campaign could thus be self-defeating—the more intense the appeal, the more alienating it could be. Shaftesbury's comment on the evil of pew-rents captures the ambivalence; if these inequalities persisted, he said,

"the labouring people of London will never be brought to attend the worship of the Establishment". Shaftesbury was a humane man, genuinely concerned about class discrimination, but his perception of real abuses was inevitably contained and controlled within the kind of commitment which the term "Establishment" catches. The positive and negative elements were thus mutually distorting: the churchman could have no real sense of the evils and failings of Christianity because he saw them externally, through the eyes of a hypothetical "recruit"; he could have no real sense of working men and working-class conditions because he saw these externally too, through the focus of church interests. Christian concern with the working class could thus result ironically in a blurring of both self-criticism and perception of others: real self-criticism was hindered by the situation of its being carried on within self-interested recruiting; real perception of the people was blunted by an inability to see them except as potential recruits.

The tension involved in this way of looking reflects the general contradiction in the whole attitude of the church to the working class in the last century, and this contradiction in turn reflects the general liberal dilemma, in education, culture, democracy, of which it is part. The church was faced with a lack of popular support, and the lack

was disastrous; it had to win this support to justify and confirm its own existence and identity as an evangelising institution. But the contradiction lies in the fact that the church needed support to validate ideas, values, and attitudes which were in fact discriminatory against the very classes whose support it so desperately needed. It demanded working-class participation in its services as a means of self-verification, not as part of a re-definition; it needed support to confirm values which it wished to keep intact from the active qualification of those called on to participate. It wanted simultaneously to secure the participation and exclusion of the workers, to win their numerical support but resist their ideological demands, to use them as a quantitative but not a qualitative force. In this way, the church-working-class relationship reflects and grows out of the whole social reality of nineteenth-century capitalism, which demanded a similar, contradictory exclusion-participation from the workers; more specifically, it reflects the cultural crisis implicit in the liberal impulse to extend pre-formed values to the people, without the values themselves undergoing change. A letter written by a workman to the *Methodist Times* in 1897 captures the dominant attitude of the churchmen in its parody:

We want you, the working classes, to attend our



church; but you must not forget that you *are* the working classes, and you must not on any account presume to be on an equal footing with ourselves, as you don't belong to our "set", and you should be grateful to us for our condescension in asking you to come at all.<sup>1</sup>

Having secured working-class attendance, an affirmation of the (anti-working-class) status quo was essential. F. D. Maurice, one of the most reflective Christian socialists of the period, made his appeal to middle-class self-interest in enlisting working-class support quite explicitly, in a pamphlet like *The Reformation of England*: if the middle classes will not accept working men for altruistic motives, they may be persuaded to see that acceptance is to their advantage.

This points to the second contradiction in the church-working-class relationship, which is again part of a much wider social reality: the fact that the positive energy expended in securing working-class allegiance was motivated to some degree by the negative end of forestalling potentially disruptive criticism. The familiar "We must educate our masters" approach to the people was particularly intensified in an institution like the church, which is culturally *nothing but* an organised

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by K. S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, London 1963, 117.



and embodied ideology, and which is therefore totally vulnerable to ideological attack in a way not so with the industrial capitalist system in general—for the capitalist system can claim allegiance and compel assent simply by offering the necessities of life. It was in the interests of the church, as of the bourgeoisie in general, that disruptive dissent should be assimilated, emasculated, and fed back to the dissenters in a mutually acceptable form. It was this process of mystification which was most dominant in Victorian England, when the open and brutal repression of the first quarter of the century was no longer feasible; the church, like society in general, searched for the point where critical demands could be met in a way which did not involve radical change in itself. To bring the working class within its own structures and allow them to authenticate its values would secure the double aim of effectively curtailing disruptive protest and confirming its own values by increased numerical support. The ambivalence of the church's attitude, the impossibility for an observer (and ultimately for those within the church) of discriminating between genuine altruism and direct self-interest, offered a source of strength and intensified the mystification: when attacked on one level the church could switch to another, when accused of acting as the propagandist tool of bourgeois

society it could protest its disinterestedness by emphasising its spiritual, universal, altruistic mission.

The inherent ambivalence in the nature of the church—its status as a simultaneously cultural and transcendental force—served to strengthen the claim, and the mystification: ideological interests could be given eternal sanctions. The church did not simply repeat, in its own terms, the process of assimilation and displacement of dissent which was general to society: it was itself a major ideological instrument in the whole process of mystification, persuading men to interiorise capitalist morality, either by direct teaching, or by transposing specific attitudes into grandly cosmic formulae. What might not be generally acceptable could be made acceptable by a sensibility and approach which was anyway expected to be somewhat archaic and over-simplifying: “the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate” could make its mark where a reference to manufacturers and operatives would be seen as political.

The church's resistance to attack and criticism was strengthened by this capacity to draw on different attitudes and responses to meet different situations, to turn contradictions to advantage. Another, vital, contradiction can be found in a basic attitude to the working class among middle-class Christians. The working class could be seen

both as dirty, debauched criminals, and as immortal souls needing salvation; each attitude existed in terms of the other, since the working class were debauched because they were not saved, and proclaimed their need of salvation by being in this depraved condition. But this provided a useful ambivalence of feeling which could be used to reinforce the ambivalences we have already seen. Since criminality and the need for salvation lay so close together, so did stern chastisement and charity, and a real repressiveness towards working people therefore carried a built-in justification. In this way, the ambivalence of the liberal dilemma we saw earlier could be rationalised in terms of routine feeling and action: active recruiting could be combined with hostility and suspicion. Either attitude, the sense of criminality or the need for salvation, could be employed to suit the circumstances: the debauchery of the poor could be encompassed and forgotten within a charitable forgiveness when the need to secure larger congregations was uppermost; the criminal tendencies of the poor could be stressed as a useful check when liberalism looked like getting out of hand. The mechanism was self-regulating—the more criminal men are the more they need salvation, but the less capable they are of being trusted or brought to share actively in the formulation of values and policy: the less essential it is for men to



be excluded, the less essential it is for them to participate.

This mystification could be further strengthened by defining participation in terms which result in exclusion. The church defined salvation in terms of duty, obedience, humility, loyalty, long-suffering, meekness, and thus created a double-bind situation: if a man refuses these virtues he is damned, if he accepts them he is muzzled. The church constructed a quite invulnerable system of mutually justifying cross-references which effectively blocked and distorted all criticism of its fundamental role and structure. Its attitude to obedience and working-class suffering and agitation was very similar to that of a thinker like Carlyle; by interpreting working-class agitation, as Carlyle did, as an inarticulate cry for guidance and help, it could simultaneously take a humane stance (in listening to and supporting the plea) and create *carte blanche* for authoritarian government. Working-class demands are taken and interpreted in a way which explains them falsely within the working-class context but conveniently within one's own, and then fed back, transformed, to the workers as a statement of what they *really* want, if they only knew it.

The confusion between repressive hostility and generous feeling is one very deep in the Victorian sensibility, and in this sense the church can be seen



as focussing dominant points in a structure of feeling common to the whole period. This particular mystification—the confusion of altruism with hostility—went so deep that those who actively and continually used formulae of charity to rationalise self-interest or brutality were often not themselves conscious that this is what they were doing—they were mystified by their own mystification. Dickens's novels expose this particular confusion of feeling continually. A character like Pecksniff lives at a point where truth and falsehood, altruism and malice, are so deeply confused that it is sometimes literally impossible to say at any given point whether his actions are hypocritical or not, for himself or Dickens or for us. Mr Podsnap can literally not see or accept unpalatable facts; Murdstone and Dombey explain their cruelty to themselves as kindness, and others accept their interpretations and strengthen them by their acceptance. Dickens was aware of this structure of feeling in his society, and he saw it as particularly operative in attitudes to the poor. His interest in evangelicalism is significant here, because the attitudes to the poor of one type of Victorian evangelical are a powerful example of the invulnerability of a system equipped with mutually confirming responses. Confronted with evident poverty and suffering, the evangelical could say both that it was the result of the sin of those involved and that

it encouraged thrift and self-control; confronted with an obvious instance of sinless suffering—a child's for instance—or of poverty clearly not resulting in virtue, he could refer the situation to God's inscrutable will, and give concrete confirmation of this in the theory of Malthus and Ricardo; if this failed to convince, or was felt as harsh, he always had available the unanswerable response that life was very short compared with eternity, which effectively blocked further argument.

Cuthbert's *Working Man's Apostolate* (1902) advanced the theory that the only way to stop the leakage from the catholic working class was to convert the working class generally to catholicism. In this kind of statement the situation we have examined is caricatured: non-catholics must be brought into the church so that catholics can be kept in the church so that the church can be kept in a job. The inextricability of missionary zeal from self-interest in the church throughout the nineteenth century was a source of serious weakness, creating contradictions which reflected and intensified reactionary attitudes. The middle-class Christian could not tolerate the rejection of Christianity by the working class, but neither, often, could he accept that the cause of the rejection lay in the values offered: some genuine self-criticism certainly went on within the church, but

it was easy to fall back on a simple and universal remedy like the abolition of pew-rents, which could create opportunities for progressive action while leaving fundamental values and structures unexamined. The contradiction involved in wanting simultaneously to win over and exclude the working class is focussed in the heated arguments about the advisability of appointing working men to the ministry, for here the deadlock is fully exposed: to open the ministry to working men would be to make values available for re-definition, not to open it could mean permanent failure of contact with the people. The church never thought or felt its way beyond the deadlock: when more liberal attitudes emerged, they revealed glimpses of their opposites in their very enthusiastic self-consciousness. This statement by the Archbishop of York, addressing a conference of working men in Sheffield in 1878, can perhaps be left to speak for itself:

We began by saying, you are a working man and I am a working man, and now we have come to you as one working man to another. But I am afraid the working man saw through that. He saw a distinction between the position of a bishop and the position of a man who works day by day for his daily wages. . . . We are not working men addressing working men. . . . We

have a stronger bond yet than that of being working men together. We are immortal souls together.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. *Anti-institutionalism*

The second major failure of Christian social thinking in the nineteenth century was its incapacity to translate a radical consciousness into terms of actual, detailed institutional change, and its hostility (inherent in its particular kind of radicalism) to all idea of programmes and institutions as significant elements in social thinking. F. D. Maurice declared in a letter to an anxious friend that he was concerned to separate socialism from "communism, red republicanism, or any anarchical opinion whatsoever", and this determination on the part of a relatively sophisticated thinker to place Christian socialism in its own category, apart from actual revolutionary political programmes, exposes the central defect of this thinking. For the Christian socialists, socialism was a moral crusade, a revolution in men's hearts, but not, in the last analysis, "The Organisation of Labour, Central Boards, or whatever you like . . ." (Maurice, in a letter to Ludlow). Charles Kingsley declared sorrowfully in an open letter to the Chartists in the Christian socialist paper, *Politics*

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Inglis, 22.



*for the People*: "I think you have fallen into the mistake of fancying that *legislative* reform is *social* reform, and that men's hearts can be changed by an act of parliament." The emphasis is a vital one, but Kingsley himself and most of the Christian socialists were too ready to fall into the opposite mistake of believing that social reform can be achieved *without* legislative reform, and men's hearts changed without acts of parliament. The basic contradiction in Christian socialism was that it attempted a radical critique of contemporary society in the context of an ultimate disbelief in social reality as an object worthy of absolute attention. Christian socialism was so concerned to assert, against the pressures of merely utilitarian change, that socialism was about human morality and relationship, that it tended to forget that it is only in the detailed institutional processes of society that feelings and relationships are negotiated. The failure to grapple with actual issues was a failure of nerve which reflected the fundamentally conservative basis of much Christian socialist thinking. When socialism advanced beyond an unformulated humanitarianism to the level of specific proposal, the deeply conservative elements which had so far offered a basis for anti-capitalist criticism, in their concern with an older, "organic", and personal community, could then shift under pressure into an anti-socialist stance, as

the quotation from Maurice's letter indicates. The very elements which constituted the basis of much Christian socialism could be the elements which broke it down into a vague, timeless, utopianism when it met the challenge of actual issues. The Christian Socialist Union, after several years of formally socialist existence, had a serious conflict when certain members decided that socialism was about the common ownership of the means of production; Stewart Headlam's Guild of St Matthew, probably the best known end-of-the-century Christian socialist group, preached a mild brand of fabianism; the very label "Christian" was enough to deprive "socialist" of its immediate, practical consequences, and to make socialism only a matter of inward change.

The paradox of Christian socialism was that its very depth and cosmic sense was the basic cause of its impotence. By emphasising that socialism was a religious matter, concerned with the whole human situation in relation to the divine, it inflated it to a significance which was then too elevated to comprehend actual detail. Its distrust of, and lack of interest in, institutions reflected a disengagement from social reality which could be justified at a theological level; socialism meant the incarnation of the divine in human society, but the centre of interest could then be the divine rather than the human. Criticism of industrial capitalism was

easier within this framework than advancing positive suggestions of an alternative society, since it was always easier to describe what was not divine than what would be. The logical extreme of this dislocation of actual and ideal, human and divine, was Catherine Booth's, when she said:

What does it matter if a man dies in the work-house? If he dies on a doorstep, covered in wounds like Lazarus?—what does it matter if his soul is saved<sup>1</sup>?

Christian socialism has therefore an identifiable place in the whole developing pattern of socialist politics in the middle and late nineteenth century, and its relative unimportance as a phenomenon in itself is qualified by its significance within this general development and its interaction with other, more central trends. Christian socialism falls distinctly on one side of the dichotomy which distorted, and still distorts, British left-wing thinking—the dichotomy between a basically moral and humane criticism of capitalism, and a sociological, institutional concern. It joined certain elements of anarchism, the Socialist League, and the ILP in confronting the Fabians, the Social Democratic Federation, and the TUC. Christianity, which above all should have provided a living

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Inglis, 176.



synthesis of moral and practical, reinforced the division in socialist thinking at a crucial moment by throwing its weight conclusively (if largely unconsciously) behind one side of it, and the effect of this on the overall situation was deep. It meant that the Christian contribution to socialist thought was now confirmed in the character of a poetic humanitarianism which could be usefully drawn on to underline aspects of another body of thought, one seen as more practically relevant; Christianity was reduced to a vague ethic of goodness which was cultivated in a separate compartment of feeling, distinct from the institutional concern.

Christianity had already been processed by the Victorian sensibility in a way which made this situation inevitable. The growing dislocation of fact and feeling in Victorian society meant a division between religion and theology; the former was fostered as a body of humane and safely generalised feeling, the latter suspected as rigid dogma. Religious sentiment, shorn of its factual context of theological truth, could then be conveniently blended into any version of life which needed some emotive underpinning, used as a structure of feeling in arguments essentially in different terms. Carlyle's firm, vague gestures towards "eternal verities" and "the Temple of the Universe"; Arnold's appeal to the "absolute and eternal"; Dickens's exploitation of religious feeling



and imagery—all exemplify this process. The opposed movement to this, in Christian thinking, was the social implications of the Oxford Movement, as they are made explicit in Maurice's earlier work. Here, by emphasising the concrete co-operative community of the church as an image of ideal human society, the translation from Christian to social thinking could be made in theological rather than merely religious terms. It was not this element, however, which survived and came through as a force in socialist thinking: it yielded place to religious sentiment, and only revived as an active element within Christian social thinking quite recently.

The maladjustment between the moral and institutional which crippled Christian socialism in the nineteenth century has continued into our own period, in new ways. The writing of Dawson, Maritain, Berdyaev in the thirties and forties shows the same tension between an often quite specific critique of industrial capitalism and a call for an essentially *spiritual* revival, which is seen as "the sacramental expression of the Eternal" in human society.<sup>1</sup> Christian criticism of capitalism is here still unable to decide the degree of its commitment to the "temporal": at points it can achieve an ingenious fusion of involvement and

<sup>1</sup> On this see W. G. Peck, *The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement*, London 1933.

detachment by suggesting that it is precisely because the church is a transcendent reality, the bride of Christ, that she is involved in (and can interfere in) any aspect of human society. Ambivalence is again turned to advantage.

In the nineteenth century, the Salvation Army was an essentially religious organisation involved in social reform; the Labour Churches were essentially social organisations involved in religion. In the first case socialism was diluted, in the second case Christianity; the Salvation Army saw social reform as a way to religious belief, the Labour Church saw religion as a way to socialist belief. (The motto on the front of their newspaper began as "God is our King", and was then replaced by the somewhat more specific "Let Labour be the basis of Civil Society".) Both organisations fall on either side of the ideal synthesis of moral and practical concern. The institutional vagueness of Christian social thinking is mediated in a direct line from the religious socialism of Kingsley, through the anti-socialist reformism of Cardinal Manning, to the ambivalence of *Rerum Novarum*, where accommodation of socialist feeling is made within what remains a conservative framework, and any number of political readings are possible. Anti-institutionalism has remained a powerful factor with the most progressive modern theologians, as this statement of Bultmann's shows:

For Christian love is not something that can be represented by programmes and implemented in organisations. It is rather something which always belongs to the "Moment"—to *my* particular moment. It is quite true that in regard to particular ills and sufferings of the present, just such a love may demand a programme of aid and of organisation. Yet love is not consummated and assured in them. On the contrary, programmes, organisations, and institutions can become just a cloak for lovelessness, and can blind me to the real demands of the moment, the concrete "thou" which confronts me.<sup>1</sup>

The apparent concreteness of this conceals its real abstraction—the abstraction of a moment from a historical process, of an individual from social reality, of a relationship from political structures, of the "essence" of love from its embodiment in actual social strategies. The abstraction leads logically to Bultmann's conservative attitudes to freedom, individual, society, in his essay "Freedom and Western Civilisation". Bultmann is the flower of a protestant theological tradition which has explored the idea of personal authenticity; it is significant of our situation that this exploration has gone on, often, outside the context

<sup>1</sup> R. Bultmann, *Essays Philosophical and Theological*, London 1955.

of the other, chief theological (primarily catholic) exploration of our time, that of community. To return authenticity and community together is to make the kind of synthesis which the whole weight of Christian social thinking, with its instinctive individualism, has tended against.

### 3. *The conservative radical*

A third, major failure of Christian social thinking is that it has tended, in attacking industrial capitalism, to attack from the wrong positions. We have seen this already to some extent in looking at Christian socialism, and this failure is closely related to the anti-institutional bias of Christian socialism generally. Built into most anti-capitalist protest during the nineteenth century were reactionary elements which could assume varying degrees of dominance, and it is characteristic of the Christian protest and the Christian radical sensibility that its positive criticism was often qualified or cancelled by the negative aspects of its own position. The dilemma, of progressive and reactionary elements becoming entwined, was general to the nineteenth century, but it was intensified in Christian thinking. The need to attack industrial capitalism from the basis of known, alternative experience of relationship could mean a retrogressive attachment to a remembered



"organic" society; a sense of the disruptive individualism of bourgeois democracy could lead to a call for a society integrated under strong authoritarian structures; the need for prototypical relationships and communities could entail a social application of paternal and family relationships which became in political terms reactionary; the experience of alienation in an over-complex society could result in a commitment to the immediate, personal, and concrete which in fact obstructed sociological thinking; the sense that men had lost all defining and self-expressive function within society could lead to a medievalist conception of "organic" function and social role which crippled rather than contained individual freedom.

The Christian social protest was particularly vulnerable to all these negative elements—partly because of the innate conservatism which we have already looked at, partly because these social attitudes correspond to already existing attitudes in Christian structures and sensibility. Medievalism and authoritarianism are two obvious instances of attitudes which struck deep chords within Christianity: if the social problem could be identified and interpreted in these terms, as a disintegration of true order and a loss of organic relationship, socialist protest could be acceptably translated into traditional Christian language, and socialism

would therefore involve no major adjustment of consciousness. Again, the traditional anti-intellectual philistinism of one mainstream of Christianity could blend into a vague anti-capitalism, as it did in the "muscular Christianity" of Kingsley and Thomas Hughes (who taught the bible and boxing with little variation of approach). A narrow and simpleminded assertion of the crudely physical and immediate, a rejection of social complexity, could posture as a political stance. In the thinking of a man like Kingsley, progressive and reactionary attitudes are inseparable; socialism genuinely means co-operative activity in society, but this will take place within a restoration of firm structures of authority; a revolutionary situation must be achieved, but potentially revolutionary movements like chartism are rejected as disruptive; socialism is translated into the public-school virtues of physical health and patriotism, and bourgeois capitalism becomes un-English. Cardinal Manning's response to an enquiry about how he felt when the dock-workers cheered him—"an Englishman"—is part of the same feeling. An apparent radicalism drew its energy from a conservative commitment to a pre-industrial, ordered, and organic society, and the conservatism broke through continually to disable real criticism. Sustaining this reactionary rejection of actual society was, at points, a general disengagement from

social reality as such, so that the line between criticism of a specific, bourgeois society and criticism of society as such was continually and unconsciously being crossed.

In the last years of the nineteenth century, catholicism became an anti-bourgeois, anti-commercial force in a new way, as part of the whole equipment of a decadent, aristocratic, and aesthetic sensibility. Again, Christianity was drawn on as an element in a rejection of contemporary society made for essentially the wrong reasons, a rejection which in its exotic irresponsibility shared in the alienation it attacked. For writers like Wilde, Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, the Catholic Church supplied a structure of feeling which satisfied all needs—it had simultaneously the rigid authoritarianism essential to relieve personal guilt, and a ritual and mystique which offered sensuous fulfilment. The enjoyment of censorship and confession combined with the enjoyment of liturgy and incense in a sado-masochistic dialectic which reflected the structure of feeling of the whole period; imperialism made the same combination in its simultaneity of tough, rigid discipline and luxurious, mystical experience in oriental jungles. The nineties showed quite conclusively that catholicism was only capable of becoming an anti-*bourgeois* force when it was reduced to an anti-*social* force: “bourgeois” became equated



with the whole, sordid process of ordinary social living, and resistance to specific social structures was therefore, fundamentally, resistance to social structures in themselves, as antagonistic to individualist self-fulfilment.

In the "organic" medievalism of Chesterton, the anti-machinery Christian guild socialism of A. J. Penty, the nineteenth-century failures were mediated into our own period, and are still, in modified ways, very powerful. The tepid liberalism of a good deal of the social criticism which has sprung from the catholic renewal of the sixties, the continuing distrust of detailed programme and of institution, the use of terms like "exploratory" and "open-ended" to rationalise a basic refusal of commitment—these can be seen as particular legacies from the past. The inability to think and feel beyond paternalistic and family models of community, in discussion both of church and community, the preoccupation with concrete and personal activity at the expense of more complex sociological thinking, are parts of the same inheritance, and must be recognised as such if contemporary Christian radicalism is to avoid its traditional weaknesses. The situation in Britain at present is that theological and social renewal is taking place within the growing and consolidating catholic middle-class which this century has produced, and while it is gaining from this all the vital



advantages of free, intelligent, and humane discussion, it is tending, inevitably, to stay fixed at a point within the ideological boundaries which constitute the middle-class ethos. The conservative tradition of the catholic working class, deeply influenced by Irish attitudes, has meant that there is no generally available radical alternative, in that class, to merely liberal renewal on the part of the middle class. In this sense, the catholic situation again reflects the general political reality of our society, and is shaped by it; and the solution of the particular catholic deadlock will therefore grow out of a general solution. Meanwhile it is important, if Christians are to be authentic radicals, that we learn from past mistakes.

# 9

## The failure of the Christian revolution/*Adrian Cunningham*

... the Roman proletarians did not live by working, but from the alms which the government doled out. So the demands of the Christians for collective property did not relate to the means of production, but the means of consumption. The communism, this community of the consumption of goods, which the early Christians proclaimed could not be brought into existence without the communal labour of the whole population, on the land as common property, as well as in the communal workshops. At the period of the early Christians, it was impossible to inaugurate communal labour, with communal means of production, because the labour rested, not upon free men, but upon the slaves, who lived on the edge of society. Christianity did not undertake to abolish the

inequality between the labour of different men, nor between their property. And that is why its efforts to suppress the unequal distribution of consumption goods did not work. [Rosa Luxemburg, *Socialism and the Churches.*]

If we were not consumers but users, we might look at society very differently, for the concept of use involves general human judgements—we need to know how to use things and what we are using them for, and also the effects of particular uses on our general life—whereas consumption, with its crude hand-to-mouth patterns, tends to cancel these questions, replacing them by the stimulated and controlled absorption of the products of an external and autonomous system. [Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution.*]

Rosa Luxemburg's thesis may have to be modified in terms of more recent historical studies, but the sole emphasis of early Christian communism on community of goods and not community of work is undoubtedly correct, and the limitation, the built-in tendency towards self-cancellation, of this form of community, the impossibility of its being extended to a whole society or even large group, quite clear. The reason for drawing attention to this limitation is not just to clarify our ideas of early Christian communion, or draw out some of

the less obvious consequences of the Christian compromise over slavery; the separation of production and consumption, explicable here in terms of the historico-social situation, provides an essential guiding direction for understanding all subsequent Christian social teaching. For when the potentialities of productive forces<sup>1</sup> permitted the development of communal labour, ownership, and control (that is, when the surpassing of feudalism, the growth of urbanisation, and productive techniques demanded ever increasingly complex forms of co-operation), this separation within Christian teaching, frequently a source of conflict, entered into contradiction with itself. And the contradiction exactly matched, and was partially conditioned by, the contradiction of capitalism itself. Thus, Christian social thought and capitalist society have moved *pari passu* in a movement of mutual complementarity; and any Christian criticism of capitalism which retained the divorce of production and consumption was doomed to futility.

Capitalism and Christianity have danced a slow jive through history, with moments of attraction, attachment, and repulsion, the underlying collaborative sympathy of step and rhythm making

<sup>1</sup> The term "productive forces" is not used in any narrow sense: man is a productive animal, transforming his environment and himself in a single process.



a single pattern. We need, not a change of tempo, but a radical critique of the whole pattern and sequence, a new sense of direction, a movement of separation, hostility, and surpassment.

### *Compromise . . .*

The separation of work and consumption in early Christianity (or more accurately, in view of their historical situation, the non-connection of the two) is, of course, not the only shaping force in the long crisis of Christian social thought. It is one of a series of mutually determining dualisms, which shaped Christianity, often fruitfully, over many centuries.

The emasculation of the Christian revolution which comes decisively with the adoption of Christianity as a state religion under Constantine—the artificial transposition from a mode of presence in the world engaged at a variety of levels, at once diffuse and effectively transformative, to a structural and institutional incorporation within a particular hegemonic system—is of crucial importance. The subtle processes of accommodating distortion to which the Christian opposition to war was subject<sup>1</sup> have a paradigmatic significance. The (as yet far from consistent)

<sup>1</sup> See Stanley Windass, *Christianity versus Violence*, London 1964.

resolution of these tensions in Augustine's hesitant distinction between interior dispositions and external acts—loving your enemy whilst slaughtering him—sets the bass note for many later variations and diverse applications. From Origen's comparison of the state to a chain gang of criminals doing useful work (*Contra Celsum* iv, 70) to Augustine's thoughts on judicial torture:

If then such darkness surrounds social life, will the wise judge take his seat on the bench? That he will. For human society, which he cannot rightly abandon, constrains him to do his duty. He will take his seat and cry, "From my necessities deliver Thou me." [*City of God* xix, 6.]

the movement of compromise is shaping itself. The anguished cry is to vary between being merely a regretful murmur and being the proud boast of the parties of order, but throughout history this Christian duty is to be most effectively discharged. One would also include in this general background the other interlocking dualisms of heavenly and earthly, which reach a focus in many natural-law moral formulations, and the overall cultural developments outlined in Theo Westow's *Variety of Catholic Attitudes* (London 1963).

... and integration

The essential result of these developments vis à

vis the growth of capitalism was the partial collapse of the tensions, present from the beginning in social ideas, between community centred on consumption and community centred on production (the latter, of course, includes the former as a necessary corollary). "Partial collapse" is a key phrase; for the emphasis, which was to be determining for catholic social thought, was not an acceptance of individualism and rejection of society—as community of consumption might lead one to believe—but a stressing of one term of the tension *as an explanation of the other* when the two in practice became separable. It is this, the invalid transposition of the pattern of shared consumption and the corresponding "change of heart" ethic from its possibly meaningful small community context to constitute an explanation of the true nature of a whole society—what happens in it, how strains and conflicts are to be understood and changed—which constitutes the partial collapse of the tension, and which blurs, distorts, and limits catholic social thought. The original implicit tension between production and consumption became, in scholastic terms, the abstract harmony of private property rights "given for the common benefit". The harmony is abstract and often reflects a "wished" resolution of underlying social conflicts, but it was roughly adequate to the normative stratification of medieval society,

its familial and status orientation.<sup>1</sup> Its continuance, however, into the situation of emergent capitalist society was to reverse whatever capacity it had to be translated into action; and its effect was largely, and often against the intentions of its proponents, to validate the radical divorce of production and consumption which becomes a fact with the development of capitalist society and surplus production. Surplus products were of no real value in medieval society (and were thus available for distribution in charity), but with the coming of productive techniques capable of constantly producing surplus and the emergence of a financial system based on and making sense of surplus, not only is there a vital advance beyond subsistence production or the mere maintenance of the achieved standard, but the orientation of production begins to shift from use to profit-via-use. In this situation the adequacy of the Christian social ethic to its actual social basis breaks down, and the period of hiatus to which we belong opens; the implicit conflict we have sketched becomes for the first time an operative fact, and Christian social thinking enters into contradiction with itself.

The influence this collapsed dualism exercised

<sup>1</sup> It may be worth noting in passing that Aquinas, to whom the "private rights given for common benefit" theory is usually traced, relates the argument to *positive*, and not to *natural*, law.



in the slow development of a viable bourgeois ethic, once societal conflicts entered into the realm of contradiction, can be seen implicit in Tawney's classic study *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London 1926). The specific edge given to an already existent proto-capitalism by the idea of justification manifested in works—given, that is, in all the many mutations of puritanism, from rigid authoritarianism to utilitarian individualism—was a reversal within the same individualistic and dualistic assumptions of the separation of justification and works. The equality of all souls before God, the spiritual unity and equality underlying actual inequality and conflict, becomes the inequality of men before God enshrined in social forms, but the final effect is roughly comparable; for the puritan formulation is more closely appropriate to the specific determination of continuing social conflict which is enshrined in capitalism.

With the final severance of the bourgeois state from its medieval origins, the kind of dualism in the private property-common use formulation, act and disposition, is mediated in a new form, and one which remains central to the liberal tradition in its theories of sovereignty. In England, its crucial formulation by Locke has two distinct though related phases. The first, paralleling historical developments, is to push the conflict of Christian theories and actual social practice into triumphant

contradiction and proclaim their final disjunction as an immutable truth:

... the power of civil government ... is confined to the care of the things of this world and hath nothing to do with the world to come ... He jumbles heaven and earth together, the things most remote and opposite, who mixes these two societies, which are in their original, end, and business, and in everything perfectly distinct and infinitely different from each other. [John Locke, *Letter on Toleration*.]

But this is only a preliminary step towards the re-presentation of the dichotomy in purely secular terms within the theory of civil society itself. The process is by no means clear, and its development in Locke is still clogged with hesitant inconsistencies; but, as Professor MacPherson has shown in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, the capitalist state needed to proclaim, against the aristocratic-feudal ideal of natural order and subordination, the equality of all men, and simultaneously to justify the actual inequalities of men in contemporary society—a Hobbesian premise avoiding a Hobbesian autocratic conclusion. Once again equal natural rights and differential effective rights are simultaneously asserted—the dualism enters its completely secular phase. The move through

the eighteenth-century thesis of true self-love and social love being the same, to its nineteenth-century form that the maximum competition equals the maximum common good, is then easily accomplished.

This is, of course, not to suggest that Aquinas is responsible for Locke's formulation of a mercantile capitalist rationale; my point is that the attempt at harmony in private rights-common benefit, and the rationalisation of disharmony in equal natural rights-differential effective rights, are both related to the original and implicit tension between production and consumption. Community of goods, and the whole series of denunciations of the rich,<sup>1</sup> were radical demands and in no way to be underestimated, but new situations demand new formulations of the demand for change towards conformity with Christ. It was this translation of the Christian revolution into an effective critique of capitalism which failed to emerge; and with this failure of translation, the implicit tension becomes explicit contradiction, and exactly marries at the practical level with the divorce of production and consumption which lies at the basis of capitalism.

It was one of Marx's great insights to see the connection of the dualism in Christianity—"its cult of the abstract human being"—and the

<sup>1</sup> These are usefully collected in Walter Shewring (ed.), *Rich and Poor in Christian Tradition*, London 1948.



capitalist state. The phrase from Rom. 3:28: "therefore a man is justified by faith without deeds",<sup>1</sup> which he quotes in *The German Ideology*, is for him the essential statement of Christianity: Christians obtain an illusory victory over the world by transferring their kingdom beyond it; and man's essentially practical and communal existence is devitalised—"the transference of the adjustment of all earthly infamies to heaven justifies further existence of those infamies". Marx traces this cult through its various forms: the contradiction of the ideals of Christianity and its practice, the split between the spirit of religion and its dogmas and institutions, which is the "greatest irreligiousness", justifying the comparable and related divorce between the spirit of society and its institutions, the spirit of the community and the private individual. This cult of abstraction is precisely the mark of Christianity and of capitalist society; abstract natural law and

<sup>1</sup> This text may provoke associations with Lutheranism, and raise the question of whether this ethic and the Calvinist influence mentioned above were not in conflict in the formative period of capitalism. If, as I would claim, both (like the catholic version) work within the overall dualist assumptions, and are specific determinations of it, then their social effect in terms of productive relations need not be dissimilar. And both can be related analogously to different parts of the theory exemplified in Locke: religion and society are quite separate, and inequality of goods produces, and then reflects differences of rationality.



abstract natural rights as both the reflection and justification of the abstract commodity which man becomes in society under the sway of alienated labour.

For a society made up of the producers of commodities, where the general relations of social production are such that the individual labours of the various producers are related one to another in the concrete commodity form as embodiments of undifferentiated human labour, Christianity with its cult of the abstract human being, is the most suitable religion—above all, Christianity in its bourgeois phases of development, such as protestantism, deism, and the like. [*Capital*, I.]

### *The failure of Christian protest*

But how is this secularisation of the dualism in Christian social teaching towards its capitalist apogee and final contradiction, to be reconciled with the long tradition of Christian opposition to capitalism, which reaches apparent denunciation in, for example, *Rerum Novarum*? How is this tradition of opposition related to the actual fact of the determining, validating role which the church has often played in capitalist society? The solution may be seen, within the general connection of the

secular and religious rulers, in the interplay of three kinds of opposition to capitalism which are each self-cancelling and thus objectively validatory.

The first is an "anti-materialism" which attacks the capitalist "spirit" in terms of spiritual criteria, and thus simultaneously negates any real (materialist) attempt to change the concrete forms in which alone the "spirit" operates. Such a spiritualised attack on capitalism is, of course, because of its abstract form, quite compatible with the practice of ecclesiastical capitalism, as most sermons on this theme demonstrate. The dualism is attacked in terms of one of its own components, and thus the attack is self-cancelling and the dualism in fact endorsed. Variants of this oppositional technique can in practice become direct attacks on real attempts to change the status quo, as in Cardinal Otavianni's attack on the worker priests which contrasted (as did Locke) seeking after material bread with seeking after heavenly bread. Or, at the institutional level, and more closely allied to the stress on consumption rather than production, one might note the applicability of Rosa Luxemburg's hypothesis to the "official answer" to the worker priests' purpose of creating community at the point of production: the secular institutes, where community is in terms of leisure time and shared consumption. The history of

social catholicism is littered with such objectively validating forms of opposition.

The second form, a more specific and respectable determination of the first, is to accept the alienated abstractions of capitalism and then argue within their terms. Thus effort can still be given to the meaning and ethics of usury, or the just wage, price, and profit—the abstract and totally ineffectual regulation of the general processes of capitalist economics. Arguments of this kind implicitly validate the status quo: the Christian is concerned exclusively with regulating relations between economic classes, not with their suppression or surpassing. And even within these terms, how could special catholic categories adapted from medieval economic theory ever be of any significance at all in modern pluralistic societies? Very few of the proponents of such arguments have the unconscious honesty to reveal their basic assumption: “We are faced with paganism, we must bring back whole classes to Christ”.<sup>1</sup> Alienated and fundamentally capitalist concepts of catholic social thought are of no practical use whatsoever: we have first to Christianise the whole country, then convince it of the value of our particular set of abstractions, in order

<sup>1</sup> *Towards Social Peace* (Catholic Social Guild pamphlet, 1956).

to get a more moderate capitalism. "Parturiunt montes. . . ."

The third form of opposition, and perhaps the most pervasively confusing, is put in perspective once one realises that the anti-acquisitiveness of the church during the Reformation was based on already moribund, feudal-centred concepts. This opposition attacks the capitalist system as whole, but at the merely rhetorical level, by basing its criticism on the previous phase of the dualism: that is, it is made in terms of a fundamentally pre-capitalist society. One sees this strikingly in the majority of papal encyclicals, but it permeates almost every section of catholic social thought. From the very outset this opposition announces its own practical futility. The capitalist "spirit" is divorced from the "employers": the first can be safely attacked; the latter, as a class—vague mentions of anonymous misdemeanours can be included—are one of the simple "givens" of inscrutable divine wisdom. Within this overall mystifying self-cancellation, however, it can, by its deployment of preindustrial concepts and modes of thought related to the preponderantly agricultural basis of Italian society in the phase of its formulation, and the continuing peasant-basis of Italian catholicism, provide an overt and total response to capitalism at every point. Agricultural, peasant-aristocratic, concepts of natural hier-



archy; society as an organism; the dignity of labour (in the particular connotation which this phrase carries in context); vocational groups and functions—all these can be opposed to the guiding principles of capitalism with passionate rhetorical emphasis. But whilst the opposition can be total, it can have no actual purchase on the present, for the actual forms of society in which these concepts had some social basis and relevance have been definitively and irrevocably surpassed. Such a total opposition is in fact totally irrelevant in terms of even the most limited efficacy. At most it can moderate existing tensions, but only at the price of further confirming the status quo.

The formal opposition of the organic, vocational-group theory, and capitalism, is maintained in terms of a conflict of abstracted "spirits", while the actual substance of the functional idea is smuggled in behind the word "employers" to sustain the notion of inevitable and God-given class structures. The organic idea was always open to conflict in its feudal origins, but when it is used covertly in social catholicism to sustain the status quo when the actual conflict has entered into contradiction—that is, when a terminology rooted in past social conflicts is used actually to maintain, though formally to attack, the contradiction into which the original conflict has entered, it can only result in confusion and paralysis.

The only way in which this opposition could become truly operative and constructive was in the artificial and reactionary formation of fascist corporative states—the actual regression of society falling into line with a theoretical regression. Thus it was no coincidence, or just the multi-purpose generality of the organic concept, that it was made a central theme of Action Française, or that it was invoked by the German hierarchy in 1933 to validate the Nazi accession to power:

Only if the individual sees himself as a part of an organism and places the common good ahead of individual good will his life once again be marked by the humble obedience and joyous service that Christian Faith demands . . .<sup>1</sup>

The confusion and paralysis in this direction played an important part in that “vital traditionalism” which in the thirties marked the zenith of catholic *progressive* thought—which spoke of the Christian revolution in terms which remain permanently important *and* supported the fascist crusade of General Franco. Thus even Christopher Dawson could write in 1934:

It is true that in Austria and Italy the peril of communism and the breakdown of the capitalist

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Gorden Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler's Wars*, London 1964, 109f.

order have led to a return towards catholic social principles, as represented by the Corporate State. But the Corporate State is only catholic when it is in catholic hands. [*Colosseum* 1, 3.]

The bankruptcy of catholic social thought is not apparent only in the self-cancellation and confusion within each form of argument individually, for I have separated them simply in order to draw this out; in fact, all three forms often exist in completely muddled-together ways, and the confusion is then only increased. One can parallel this in almost any catholic account of the history of social catholicism—anything from the Austrian feudal school to the Atelier of the babouvist Buchez can be indiscriminately lumped together as long as it is somehow catholic and social. A more specific example is Bishop Beck's Catholic Social Guild pamphlet, *Towards Industrial Co-operation*. He thoroughly rejects the fabian idea of nationalisation, drawing on G. D. H. Cole's arguments that it denies the worker effective responsibility, and his general bent at this stage would seem to be towards some form of workers' control. Yet at the same time he falls back into pre-industrial terms and argues that "the widest distribution of private property is the best defence of working-class freedom", and takes from *Quadragesimo Anno* the func-

tional theory of classes. He stresses the pope's statement that the worker does *not* acquire, by the nature of his work, a strict right to share in the management; whereas I have argued that it is inherent in the very nature of work, especially in a complex industrial society, that ownership and control belong equally to all engaged in it—that is, that there should be, not partnership or shared management, but workers' control; industrial democracy rather than a compromised co-operation. It is thus no surprise that this confusion can only end in a final plea for a change of heart: "It is the spirit rather than the system that counts", and a quotation from Pius XII which is an abdication of action (*my italics*):

*God grant that those who possess wealth may evade the spiritual snares of riches, and that the workers may be spared the inhuman trials of grave wants.*

When the transference of all adjustment of earthly infamies to heaven has been so thoroughly stated the "inhuman" appears as what it is—a mere rhetorical flourish.

### *Affirmation of neo-capitalism*

However much one may agree with this analysis, hasn't the whole position changed radically for



the better with the coming of *Mater et Magistra*? The simple fact that, in the bourgeois press, *Rerum Novarum* was greeted, if at all, with caution, and *Mater et Magistra* with acclamation, should have given pause for thought. The process of watering down the attack on the capitalist spirit between earlier social encyclicals and the most recent has been brought out by Damian McDevitt<sup>1</sup>; and in the light of the above analysis we can take this suspicion further. *Mater et Magistra* does move forward from the anachronistic opposition of its predecessors, but only to give overall validation to contemporary neo-capitalism.<sup>2</sup> The tone of this passage is worth pondering:

One advantage which would result from the adoption of this plan would be that it would be easier to keep a check on the movement of the labour force set free by the progressive modernisation of agriculture. Facilities could then be provided for the training of such people for their new kind of work, and they would not be left

<sup>1</sup> D. McDevitt, "Pope John and the Encyclicals", *Slant* 1 (Spring 1964).

<sup>2</sup> For an account of neo-capitalism, see further Part 1, chapter 4 of this book, "Capitalism", on pp. 23-30 above; and Perry Anderson, "Origins of the Present Crisis" and Robin Blackburn, "The New Capitalism", *Towards Socialism*, ed. Anderson and Blackburn, London 1965, 11-52 and 114-45.

without economic aid and the mental and spiritual assistance they need to ensure their proper integration in their new social milieu. [para. 130.]

Rhetorical opposition collapses in an embracement of social engineering and managerialism. Confidence in scientific and technical progress which will "naturally" eliminate class conflicts, and create a "just" and "democratic" society in which each social group will find an adequate place; recognition of the state's role in co-ordinating capitalist growth implicit in the discussion of "equilibrium", "harmony", and "collaboration"; even peace and the colonial revolution—all these are dealt with within the general perspective of world-wide neo-capitalism. As capitalist society itself has moved from employer-worker conflict to their integration in terms of bureaucracy, public relations, personnel management, and the other forms described above (pp. 26ff), towards the ideal of the organisation man, the church in *Mater et Magistra* has adapted the vocational-group idea from a stance of futile opposition to one of positive validation. The essential continuity of ideas, revealing how slight a change had to be made, can be seen by referring back to *Quadragesimo Anno*:

... true and genuine social order demands that

the various members of society be joined together by some firm bond. Such a bond of union is provided both by the production of goods or the rendering of services in which employers and employees of one and the same vocational group collaborate; and by the common good which all such groups should unite to promote, each in its own sphere, with friendly harmony. . . [These groups claim] the allegiance of men, not according to their position in the labour market, but according to the diverse functions which they exercise in society. [paras. 84, 83.]

The number of phoney re-definitions here the reader can work out for himself.

The move from an anachronistic organicism, through a functionalism relating to the corporate state, to the full neo-capitalism of *Mater et Magistra*, marks the final lurching collapse of catholic social thought as a criticism of capitalism.

### *Britain*

The complex and mystifying trajectory of catholic social thinking, its complex interweaving with the various stages of the development of modern capitalist society, have in Britain undergone particular modifications which strengthen its paralysing effect. Britain was the first, and for two

centuries the most highly developed, capitalist society in the world, and this alone—the strength and durability of capitalist social structures and ideology—has constantly inhibited the full development of any genuinely socialist radicalism. If one adds to this the closeness of the kind of bourgeois theory noted in Locke to certain modes of the overall Christian dualism, the break in continuity of catholic life from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century which was concurrent with the full development of capitalism, and the absence of even the rhetorical opposition that one finds in Europe—the tensions of catholic emancipation, the fear of accusations of ultramontaniam, and thus the setting of a premium on loyalty and integration—then the predisposing factors are already strongly against anything but full assent to the status quo.

Although the interrelationship of religious and social radicalism in the early nineteenth century is complex and debatable,<sup>1</sup> one could hypothetically indicate a specific disposing factor which would help explain the size of the catholic vote for Labour in our time, and the absence of any sign

<sup>1</sup> See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, London 1963; or, more briefly, Eric Hobsbawm, *Working Man; Studies in the History of Labour*, London 1965, especially chapter 3, "Working Men". These are the best recent accounts.



of socialist thinking in articulate English catholicism. The preponderance of working class catholics in the church de facto produces a sizeable degree of support for Labour; but, in the period of the making of the English working class as a class, catholics found no such correlation between politics and religious belief as was available to members of other denominations, and thus de facto socialist tendencies have lacked articulation. Although one finds a considerable degree of Irish participation in radical agitation in England in the 1820s and 1830s, and in the chartist movement, the class distribution of catholics in the period fell into two broad groups: old catholic families and established professionals on the one hand, and members of the lower working class, particularly those of immigrant stock, on the other—that is, they fell both above and below that dissenting middle class which was to help form the intellectual content of socialism. The interplay of these factors—the break in continuity and absence in any form of a religious-centred anti-capitalism, the prudence dictated by the fear of ultramontaniam, the uneven class distribution of the catholic body, to which we might add the tensions of religious hostility precisely between catholics and dissenting radicals—meant that catholic working-class support for the forces making for socialism was silent

and inchoate. It is a legacy we have never shaken off, or even attempted to shake off. The later influence of the rhetorical opposition which one finds in Manning was only to confirm and provide an ideological form for this actual isolation and paralysis.

A further element in this deadlock was the inability of the English working-class radical, and later the trade union movement, to see the connection between capitalist exploitation at home and the imperialist exploitation of Ireland (this inability was underpinned both by straightforward cultural prejudices, and by the not infrequent importation of Irish labour to break strikes). As Marx noted the division of the British and Irish workers constituted

... the secret of the impotence of the English working class despite their organisation. It is the secret by which the capitalist class maintains its power. [Letter to Meyer and Vogt, 1870.]

The English working class will *never accomplish anything* before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. [Letter to Engels, 1869.]

If one were to extend this insight in terms of the Irish catholic working class in England and its

relations with the working class movement as a whole, then the reasons for its fragmentary and arrested development are even clearer.

### *Cultural consolidation*

The English working-class catholics not only inherited and moved within specific social and cultural limitations on the development of any socialist consciousness, for—besides the “given” or external predisposing factors—they carried within their own cultural experience and modes of thinking and organisation, certain “internal” factors; and it is the interlocking of the two which gives English catholicism its settled opaqueness and bourgeois solidity, its capacity—like that of capitalist society generally—to evade, muffle, absorb, secrete, and transform criticism or the impetus towards a new direction. Two of these “internal” predisposing factors which need some elucidation are the influence of Irish cultural patterns in an alien environment, and the peculiar forms of catholic education, lay, clerical, and religious.

The essential strength of Irish culture is its deep-rootedness in a predominantly agricultural society, and the stubborn introversion and cohesion which it developed in order to survive the

crushing weight of centuries of domination. It thus contains the living social basis for the abstracted and alienated concepts of rhetorical opposition, and suffers in living form a similar irrelevance to capitalist society. This is not in any way to underestimate the real human vitality and richness of such a culture, but to bring out its limitations in an alien environment. The remarks in the first part of this book form the basic insight into the Irish situation<sup>1</sup>; the very closeness of personal relations and the intricate network of multiple cross-acquaintanceship give a living and obvious basis to the idea of society as an extended family. But, as we have shown, such a view contains its own limitations, and to these one must add its tendency to inhibit analytic thought and the ability to think in terms of institutions. In the one case, critical thought cannot be separated from the suspicion of personal hostility; and in the other, any consideration of institutions and organisations, the focussed and concrete references of a society, is blurred and confused under the attraction of the need to reduce these to familial or personal relations ("I really believe in the other party, but I'm voting for X because he's a relation of my wife's /a more decent fellow/ his father gave my father a loan"). Face to face with the quite different situation of British industrial and capitalist society, the essential

<sup>1</sup> See especially chapter 6, "Liberalism", above, pp. 38-45.



human strength of such forces is all too easily confounded in its weaknesses; it finds in Britain no validating social basis, and can thus become a clogging confusion. One can perhaps see the influence of these factors in the overall conservatism of American unionism. The specific limiting influence of this transposed cultural form, intensified by the internal cohesiveness of any emigrant group, is increased because it operates not only within the Irish working class (and now middle class), but also through the heavily Irish composition of the clergy. The closeness of the familial analogy to the change-of-heart theme deeply embedded in catholic social thought, brings the whole cultural system into an almost impregnable position of confidence and stolidity, ratifying and reflecting the matey corporativeness of many parochial and other catholic associations.

This overall cultural introversion, the lived limitation on critical or non-familial-centred thought and experience, is reinforced and propagated by our various systems of catholic education. The fundamental bourgeois individualism enlivened with strains of baroque mysticism which comprises so much of this education has already been outlined in *Slant 4* (spring 1965); the strength of these factors, and the separation and exclusive introversion of catholic education within the general life of the country, not only breeds the

kinds of mystical-orientation noted by Monica Lawlor,<sup>1</sup> but exacerbates the general contradiction and muddle of liberal education.<sup>2</sup> The education of the clergy has also been treated in *Slant*, and to the overall features of abstraction, exclusiveness, the whittling down of human vitality and creativeness which so wickedly predominate in contemporary seminary life, two longer-term directions of development relevant to the theme of the wholesale incorporation of English catholicism into bourgeois society need to be added. Just as the church, at the level of social thinking, has progressively moved from anachronistic opposition and alliance with the parties of order towards a pluralistic engagement with capitalism (mediated at the level of action through Christian Democracy, in Europe), so the overall relationship of church and state has been transformed into an embracing of church and bourgeois society mediated, in one form, through the clerical education system.<sup>3</sup> The social area of catchment, the educational level demanded for entry, and the whole form of this education, all stand in a mutually sustaining relationship to provide a basically

<sup>1</sup> M. Lawlor, *Out of this World*, London 1965.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 6, "Liberalism", above, pp. 38-45.

<sup>3</sup> G. Siefer, *The Church and Industrial Society*, London 1964, 28 ff., gives a good account of this process in the disestablishment of the French church in 1905.

bourgeois-orientated clergy, an intensified form of the comparable movement in grammar-school education. The interplay of this given structure, and the orientation towards the priesthood as a form of upper working-class and lower middle-class social aspiration and advancement,<sup>1</sup> completes the circle of a self-recruiting, self-sustaining cultural system. These general characteristics find comparable, though less severe, counterparts in the education of religious, but the partial gain here is compensated and often cancelled by the general historical situation of the orders themselves—they were *revived* in nineteenth-century England in a mixture of deliberately anachronistic and continental forms, from which they are only beginning to disentangle themselves.

### *Methods of containment*

These seem to me the essential guiding lines for understanding the development of catholic social thought and the particular intensifications it receives from the historical and cultural situation of English catholicism. And, of course, since man only exists in society, in communication with other

<sup>1</sup> The particular stress this gets in Irish families represents a transmuted and sophisticated form of the nineteenth-century fact that in Ireland the clergy was the only "profession" open to indigenous families.

men, the ways in which society is envisaged stand in mutually determining relation with all the other aspects of his life; and the processes outlined here have a paradigmatic significance for many other specific configurations of catholic life. But how can such a complex of conflicting elements achieve any kind of sustained equilibrium and continuity? And why have the centrifugal tensions within the church not taken concrete form in dissensions and collapse long before now? How is it that, precisely in the period of its greatest contradiction, the multiple and related systems of dualism have not issued in forms comparable to the schisms and heretical fragmentations of an earlier phase? Part of the answer is simply that, in the post-Enlightenment world, conflicts that would previously have issued in heretical *Christian* action are resolved by lapsing—the “opposition” never really matures, it simply drops out. And the whole point of the analysis has been to indicate how each phase of development, each mode of tension and dualism, has carried its prophylactic, its own form of containment. But there are several other methods of containment which are particularly important for understanding our own situation, and which demand some elaboration.

### 1. *Deflection*

One of the most interesting of the findings in



Monica Lawlor's book is that in which responses were to be supplied for a child's remark: "I won't go to mass with X, I hate him." Rather than actually *doing* something about the relationship ("Why do you hate him?"; "Can't you make it up?"), most answers were aimed at arousing a sense of guilt for the feeling and its expression ("That's wicked"; "You musn't say that"). What may be a genuine problem of relationship is resolved, not in terms of relationship, but in invalidating the whole experience by suppressing it in one of its sources. This is a paradigm instance of a whole system of deflective techniques by which personal interactions can be redefined in terms of individual feelings, not only as an evasion of genuine conflict situations but as an evasion of *any* substantial interpersonal experience. The deflection of resolution from action to feeling, therefore, not only holds of problems within the community, but explains how the community can remain an observable group engaged in seemingly communal activities like the liturgy, and yet in fact be merely a collectivity of monads sharing, privately, common feelings. Bonds of community can just as often be negative as positive.<sup>1</sup> Substantial social interaction can be deflected into a multiplicity of similar individual dispositions. That this kind of social negativity, in which the liturgical community can

<sup>1</sup> See chapter 2, "Community", above, pp. 9-15.

involve as little interpersonal communication as a bus queue, does in fact frequently operate, we can all of us verify from our own experiences; and we can also realise why private devotions at mass were for many the only way of gaining *any* form of significance from a largely negative communal experience—a non-experience, a situation of articulated passivity. Changes in the liturgy go some way towards altering this situation, but the deflective habit is endemic to catholic culture in this country, and it will take more than liturgical change alone to penetrate and transform it to the necessary degree. That this experience of deflection is a common feature of many areas of bourgeois culture, and has important bearings on socio-political awareness and engagement, needs no stressing. What may need mentioning is how arousal of guilt feelings as a substitute for action can operate particularly in lay-clerical relations: at both episcopal and parochial level, appeals to unity, and the inhibiting of incipient criticism of (or even hesitancy about) the correctness and sureness of the “party-line”—the implied parallel is deliberate—took the effective form of moral blackmail, invalidation by arousal of guilt feelings (“You musn’t say that, it’s wicked”) for both the expression and the very experience which lay behind it. To take this as meaning that parents, clerics, and bishops are consciously operating this

form of blackmail would be totally to misunderstand the point: the situation is a mystified one, and—as has been stressed before—this means that none of the participants may be aware of what is actually going on, each confirming the other in a basically inauthentic role. Only the transcendence of the *whole* situation by the kind of meta-analysis attempted here, can offer any hope of intelligibility, and thus of change.

## 2. *Busying giddy minds with liturgical troubles*

At the institutional level this proneness to deflection and change of heart can marry with the kind of technique (again, not necessarily conscious) indicated by the above title—that is, energy created by genuine tensions within the church may be sublimated, as it were, into subsidiary and safe channels. As Canon Drinkwater pointed out in the *Catholic Herald* (September 1965), the critical and constructive energies blocked in the general tightening of discipline at the time of the condemnation of modernism were sublimated in the crusade for frequent communions; great numbers of young and enthusiastic priests threw themselves desperately into this crusade, as it was the only thing possible for them to do. He went on to suggest that something of the same nature was involved in the debate on the liturgy, a basically

simple set of reforms drawing attention away from urgent questions of practical Christianity. Another example might be the whole business of catholic schools: we are too busy running on the spot to avoid slipping backwards—in terms of raising funds, trying to fit 2,000 children into schools capable of teaching 500, worrying about Ministries of Education and LEAs, being self-pityingly anguished in the relentless struggle—even to think clearly about why we are doing it, let alone whether there is any point to it all; and the whole experience is perhaps, at one level, a desperate collaboration in asserting a merely formal sense of community and identity.

### 3. *Polarity*

The last type of mystified activity bred by and working back upon the general development summarised in the main analysis springs from one focus of the featureless quality of catholic social and moral thinking; namely, the dualism of the general and the particular. The teaching falls, obscurely, between the concrete and the theoretical. Thus the appeal to gospel examples of personal charity—giving one's coat, etc.—is not of much use in thinking of, say, an unofficial strike; nor is the problem of colonialism helped by talk of sovereign rights, or that of international neo-capitalist economics by theorising about usury.



The concreteness exists only in terms of dyadic personal relations, and the theory only at a level of abstract universality such as to be useless in practice—the greater part of human life gets left out. A similar dualism exists in the question of war: turning-the-other-check and just-war-theory fall, respectively, below and above any conceivable real situation.

The extremes of polarity in these and many other situations also permit a total evasion by means of meeting objections or problems near one pole by an appeal to the other. In sexual morality, for example, one questions particular instances, and the answer can come back in terms of "natural law"; one enquires about the structure of the human context of sex, and the reply can be confident talk of the "family hearth". In each case, the answer is mystifying: one has got an answer, it does touch on the question, but it does not fit it. If one perseveres in being puzzled, then sooner or later the other techniques of evasion, deflection, moral blackmail, and sublimation begin to operate—and silence soon follows.

The capacity for operating constantly in terms of such internally polarised schemes of thought can produce a real devitalisation of experience. Thus, for example, by abstracting from a real experience we can form theories about sexuality, terms used to define and analyse it—but these can

then, almost by a process of negative feedback, become regulators of the actual content and mode of the experience, and finally be re-incorporated into experience, the experience itself being modified by this re-integration of its own reification. In other words, starting with sexuality, you form abstract theories about what it is; by a further abstraction you re-define this in terms of natural law; the natural-law theory is then used to regulate sexuality; and, finally, sexuality itself can become a lived form of the theory about it, that is, devitalised, limited, alienated. I am obviously not saying that theories are unnecessary, or that sexuality needs no form of regulation; but I am objecting to a real process of alienation, and trying to account for it. Sex, though crucial, is not the only area of experience where this kind of process can operate.

### *Conclusion*

As with the forms of overt opposition to capitalism, these various techniques—modes of evasion, deflection, sublimation, polarisation, abstraction, and feedback—are separated for the purposes of analysis. Each is confusing in itself; when, as is often the case, several or all of these are in operation, either at one point, or variously on several current issues, or both, the problems of intelligi-

bility are proportionately diminished. Again, only a meta-analysis can really clarify what is going on.

All these methods of containment stand, as do all the phenomena described, in mutually determining relation to the developments outlined in the historical analysis. It is for this reason that an overall analysis is of vital importance. I am aware that my presentation is complex, difficult, even tortuous—but this is exactly the nature of the situation I am attempting to comprehend. I am simply trying to understand the historico-cultural morphology of our present desperate situation, and suggesting a set of analytical tools to facilitate further investigation, to prepare the ground for new formulations of the Christian revolution:

A demand to give up illusions about one's situation is a demand to give up a situation which needs illusions. [Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right.*]

**PART 3**

**THEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL  
RADICALISM**



1875

1876

1877

1878

1879

1880

1881

1882

1883

# 10

## Problems of a radical catholicism/*Brian Wicker*

It can be taken for granted that *Slant*—and the “Slant Manifesto”—stand for a positive engagement by catholics in the affairs of the contemporary world. But there is nothing distinctive about that. It could plausibly be said that, in England at any rate, we are all progressives now. That is to say, we would nearly all like to be thought of as being in favour of reform in the church and of a deeper commitment to the community around us. The ghetto mentality must be exorcised, once and for all. That is generally agreed. But this does not mean that the catholic body in England is unanimous on all points. Indeed, the disagreements and controversies between various groups within the “progressive” camp are as numerous and sometimes as bitter as those between any other groups in the community.

Where then does the Slant position differ from the attitudes of other catholic groups? There is no

easy answer to that question. Even if one tries to distinguish it by linking radicalism in religion to radicalism in politics, speaking of the natural affinities between the thinking of modern theologians about the church as the Christian community and the thinking of contemporary socialists about the future of modern society, this does not take one very far. For, characteristically, there is as much debate about the meaning and direction of socialism as there is about the meaning and direction of ecclesiology. One has hardly begun to define the characteristic position of *Slant* when one has made this link between catholicism and socialism. The main work still has to be done—making the connections, in detail, that alone give this general commitment any coherent meaning.

The first emphasis, I think, must be upon the extreme complexity of the position which *Slant* is attempting to establish. This complexity is simply a reflection of the extreme difficulty of the political and intellectual climate of the time.<sup>1</sup> Only a superficial mind could pretend that it is always absolutely clear where, even on the most momentous issues, the true Christian commitment must rest. The philosophical, political, and cultural wires are now so crossed that no problems can easily be seen

<sup>1</sup> Brilliantly analysed by Stuart Hall, "Political Commitment", *The Committed Church*, ed. Laurence Bright, op, and Simon Clements, London 1966, 3-25.

in complete clarity. Yet this complexity must never be allowed to obscure something which is basic to the Slant position as I understand it, namely that the absolute rights and wrongs which are abstractly spelled out in the philosophical and the moral order, do still underlie our political and cultural debate, and that hard though it may be to discern where the truth lies, it is still there underneath the surface. Complexity does not entail pragmatism. If a particular response is complicated, tentative, and exhausting, lacking in precision and demanding a constant effort of attention and intelligence, this does not mean that it is invalid. On the contrary, it is more likely to mean that it reflects at least an important part of the truth. There cannot be a simple theology, or a simple political philosophy, or a simple social ethic in a world as confused and uncertain of itself as our own.

But there is a difficulty to be faced in admitting this. For the implication seems to be that a true Christian response can only be made by those who have the time, energy, and talent to devote to the task of understanding, in its full complexity, the world they are trying to engage. Does this mean that Christianity is now to become the preserve of an "intelligentsia"? The only kind of answer that can be given to this question which neither shirks nor simplifies it, is one that tries to show that the



very notion of an "intelligentsia"—contrasted as it always is with an inert mass of the unintelligent or "simple"—is a falsification. The "intelligentsia" is a term only used by the opponents of intelligence. The proper response, therefore, is to reassert the availability to all of those who seriously try to undertake it, of an intelligent approach to the world. Intelligence is not to be equated with social sophistication, factual information, or measurable educational attainment. It is not simply a matter of cool rationality, but includes a proper degree of emotional involvement, moral sensibility, and creative imagination. While it is idle to pretend that these qualities can easily exist today in isolation from an intellectual training, they do not coincide with it. Of course, we must not romanticise primitive peasant culture, or an unlettered proletarian richness of life, or indeed an aristocratic high culture that pretends to be independent of the commercial philistinism which in fact supports it. Yet neither must we despise the values enshrined in all these, in the name of an uncriticised modernism; for they are elements in the complex world we have inherited and have to serve. The only way is to see, beneath the use of such terms of abuse as "intelligentsia", the particular view of society which is buried there, and then oppose it.

One part of the Slant position therefore is a

challenge to all who try to drive a wedge between an allegedly prophetic intelligentsia and an allegedly inert and subject mass-society. For analysis in these terms is nearly always a prelude to an attack upon intelligence itself, not merely in its narrow academic sense but also in its broad and comprehensive sense. This attack is authoritarian and obscurantist at bottom, even where it begins as a defence of the simple-minded against the "arrogance" of the (allegedly) self-appointed intellectual leaders. Yet arrogance is all the same a constant temptation, especially to anyone who tries to take up a position which is intellectually demanding, and who, however understandably, wants to cut the corners. Since a persuasive anti-intellectual pseudo-defence of the simple and the weak, however false, is part of the complex problem that has to be faced, it cannot be glossed over as if it did not matter.

In thinking of a *radical* catholicism as the characteristic posture of *Slant*, I have in mind a distinction, which I have tried to delineate elsewhere, between radicalism, on the one hand, and the twin substitutes for it which I have called "secularism" and "modernism".<sup>1</sup> These alternative postures are characteristic both of the modern ecclesiastical and the political situations. Crude

<sup>1</sup> See my book *Culture and Theology*, London 1966, Introduction *passim*.

though they are as broad categories, they help to describe the complexity of the problem as I have already discussed it. By "secularism" I mean the attempt to deal with the specifically modern problems in the church and in society by ignoring the traditional values and received truths of the historic community in which the problem poses itself, and trying to invent a new solution from scratch which will, it is hoped, be adequate to the new situation. The secularist is one to whom tradition is not something to be revered because it is a process of living growth. It is to be taken up or jettisoned according to the apparent needs of the immediate moment. The needs of the present, for the secularist, are to be discovered by a calm, unbiassed, and historical assessment unhampered by any valuation of the past for its own sake. The Bishop of Woolwich wrote in a characteristically secularist tone when he said that, for the sake of producing a radically new mould of Christianity, "we have to be prepared for *everything* to go into the melting".<sup>1</sup>

The modernist, on the other hand, is one who has an excessive regard for the condition of the empirical historic community, and as a consequence is prepared only to renew the image and streamline the machinery, while preserving the inner structure and the received values untouched.

<sup>1</sup> John Robinson, *Honest to God*, London 1963, 124.

Because he has no foundation of theory upon which to base a distinction between those elements in the structure which are essential and those which are expendable, he can only tamper with the externals and offer administrative solutions when, in fact, a fundamental shift towards a new stage of organic development is urgently required. He has forgotten the living nature of tradition, as a process of growth, and sees the empirical community a-historically. He is thus unable to see the contradictions which this lack of historical sense generates, and imagines that it is possible, for example, in the ecclesiastical sphere, to give the laity an unprecedented importance while keeping the old clerical images and culture more or less intact.

The radical opposes both secular and modernist tendencies. He sees tradition as something valuable in itself, because it is a form of life; but also he sees it as in constant change. His task is to understand the inner direction of this process in history and to commit himself to it. Radicalism grounds itself upon a profound conservatism, and sees the old position essentially as the springboard from which a new leap into the future can and must be taken.

Modernism and secularism cannot accommodate or envisage the future because they cannot comprehend either the value or the obsolescence of the past. They are trapped in a morass of contemporaneity



from which they struggle to escape by a constant putting forth of piecemeal solutions and administrative decisions. This fumbling struggle is commonly lauded as a praiseworthy empiricism and a freedom from ideology. It is this struggle which has engulfed the energies and engaged the minds of both political and ecclesiastical thinkers in Britain more or less completely for the last twenty years. Efficiency, productivity, incomes regulation, and the sophistication of incentives have become the political ideals: while decentralisation, vernacularisation, and administrative reorganisation have become the official pursuits of the church.

It would be wrong to suppose that these are somehow false objectives in themselves or that the radical is necessarily opposed to them. What is wrong with them is that as commonly presented they lack total coherence within a framework of theory, and so lose momentum as soon as an obstacle arises which seems insurmountable. They lack motivation and sense of direction. Yet to say this is merely to point to a weakness and not to offer the coherence which they lack. It is the task of construction which is the important one. But it is also the most difficult. In order that it can be tackled at all, it is necessary to pin-point the issues more clearly. Here I can only suggest, from the point of view of the radical catholic, a few of the places where the problem appears most acutely.

1. The first concerns dilemmas of Christian morality. For the catholic these crystallise themselves most clearly at the present time in the obvious conflict between "official" solutions to the two critical moral problems: sex and nuclear warfare. Thus, "official catholicism" has taken up an uncompromising position about the problem of sexual morality, while adopting an extremely vulnerable and compromising position on the morality of the nuclear deterrent. The contrast between the attitudes of the English hierarchy at the Vatican Council to these two questions is very noticeable. On the question of contraception, they have taken a firmly, not to say rigidly, "traditional" stand. But on the question of nuclear warfare, and the morality of deterrence by massive nuclear threat, they have bent the just war tradition into such a shape that it is no longer recognisable.

In understandably sharp reaction to this official position some catholics have demanded a rigid traditionalist consistency on both fronts. They have felt that you cannot coherently defend an uncompromising attitude to contraception if you are at the same time prepared to jettison the traditional refusal to compromise on mass-warfare. So we have found writers such as Peter Geach and Elizabeth Anscombe advocating, with tenacious consistency, both nuclear unilateralism and a total ban on contraception. On the other hand,

with an equal show of consistency, some of those who wish to show that the church's ban on contraception ought to be lifted have been prepared to lift the ban on nuclear warfare also. There is, undoubtedly, an external consistency of purpose behind each of these reactions which is serious and praiseworthy, by contrast with the inadequacy of the "official" position. But it is also remarkable that they are mutually self-contradictory. Yet one feels that the pursuit of consistency ought not to carry this result. There is a manifest inconsistency between these attempts to be radically consistent. Of course, this does not, by itself show that either of them is wrong. But it does mean that we cannot, simply by taking consistency *of this kind* as the criterion, arrive at a truly consistent position. There is something inadequate about the kind of consistency that is being pursued.

It is here, I take it, that a supporter of the Slant position would want to dissent both from the "official" position and from the positions of the pursuers of external consistency. For he would wish to show—or at any rate, *I* would wish to show—that it is possible within the traditional morality of the church, consistently to advocate both an uncompromising ban on nuclear warfare and nuclear deterrence, and a certain loosening of the ban on contraception. But, notoriously, it is impossible to do this without the expenditure of im-



mense intelligence (in the sense of the term I defined above). A glance at the debate that has to be gone through in pursuit of this deeper consistency will show how difficult, but also how exciting and necessary, this position is.<sup>1</sup>

Now, the conflict between the two mutually opposed attempts at consistency just outlined rests upon a radical difference about the whole nature of morality. To those who wish to ban both contraception and nuclear deterrence, moral thinking is concerned with the goodness or badness of certain kinds of action. This position in turn rests upon the philosophical claim that it is possible to describe the kinds of action in question adequately for the purposes of moral discrimination, without constant reference to the total complex of circumstances of which they are only a part. Or rather, the claim is that they are not just parts of a complex, but have a real moral independence and self-sufficiency such that they can be isolated from the rest of what is going on at the time and be judged in and for themselves. On the other hand,

<sup>1</sup> Consider for instance, Leslie Dewart's examination of *Casti Conubii* in *Contraception and Holiness*, ed. Gregory Baum, OSA, London 1964, 171 ff.; and the recent booklet on *Peace, The Churches and the Bomb* published by The Council of Religion and International Affairs (170 East 64th St, New York). It is hard to imagine a debate conducted at a higher level of intellectual rigour than is to be found in these examples.



those who wish in certain circumstances to license both contraception and nuclear war, see morality as the discussion of total sets of complex human interactions, such that the morality or immorality of particular acts can only be judged by reference to the ultimate objectives of all those involved and the ultimate consequences of what they are doing. If for the first sex is principally an act, for the second it is the "project" of a whole lifetime. In the former case, what is at stake is not the upshot of a lifetime, but that part of a lifetime which is concentrated into a single moment. For the latter, what is at stake is the meaning that a single act has in the lifetime of which it is but a segment.

If we see the conflict in these terms, then it becomes clear that the only way in which the two approaches can be reconciled—so that a licence in one sphere does not contradict a ban in another—is by a reconsideration of our fundamental approaches to morality. This is not the place to enter upon such a task. But perhaps it can be said that its outlines can be discerned in the attempt to show that there is no basic conflict between the interests of the community and those of the individuals that constitute it. For it is just such a conflict of interests that lies behind both kinds of "consistency".

Those who wish to provide a licence, do so out of a belief that the individual and his acts are but a part of a social complex which is larger than him-

self, and whose interests must ultimately govern the moral quality of the individual's acts. Taking this as a fundamental axiom, and seeing that it fits the sexual case well—for is it not obvious that sex exists for the sake of the race rather than for the individual, who after all is not obliged for his own preservation to go in for it himself?—they extrapolate from this assertion to all moral issues, and are thereby led to the belief that acts of warfare are also acts of a community rather than of the individual, and that if the community's interests are at stake anything goes. But they do this un- easily, because they are only reluctant totalitarians, and do not wholeheartedly believe in the submission of the individual to the collectivity. Rather they see a constant conflict of interests, in which, at moments of extreme moral emergency, communal interests must take command.

Exactly the opposite applies in the other case. There, seeing that the actions of those who engage in war ought not to be justified just because they are in the interests of a community which is in any case not absolute, they assert that it is always the individual at the moment of moral emergency who must bear the responsibility for his single, starkly isolated action. He cannot evade this responsibility. From here, they extrapolate to all actions, and maintain that even sex can ultimately be evaluated in terms of isolated actions morally assessable in

themselves, and without constant reference to the lifetime's "project" of which they are but tiny particles. But supporters of this now also do this uneasily, for they recognise a tension between the biological facts—which point to the communal basis of sex—and the human responsibilities, which seem to point to the separate evaluation of every particular action. But is it not possible to hold both of these conceptions of morality in a certain balance? Is it not practicable to evolve a morality according to which all moral offences are equally offences against the community *and* offences against the real needs and wants of the individual?

This is not the place for an essay in moral philosophy. But I can perhaps give a hint of the direction which, it seems to me, a "radical" morality must go by quoting from an essay by F. R. Leavis on Henry James as a literary critic.<sup>1</sup> Leavis is arguing that James's work, despite its deep aesthetic purposes, is founded always upon a moral concern. He writes:

<sup>1</sup> F. R. Leavis, "James the Critic", *Henry James: Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. Morris Shapira, London 1963, xiii-xxiii. It is perhaps characteristic of a manifesto such as the present one that its fundamental insights about the nature of morality should come from a literary source, rather than from academic philosophy in the Anglo-Saxon tradition—despite the constant moral concern in that tradition—or from catholic moral theology, which so often seems, by comparison with the best literary criticism, fundamentally unserious.

The work that commands the reader's most deeply engaged, the critic's most serious, attention asks at a deep level: "What, at bottom, do men live *for*?" And in work that strikes us as great art we are aware of a potent normative suggestion: "These are the possibilities and inevitablenesses, and, in face of them, *this* is the valid and the wise (or the sane) attitude." Lawrence asked, towards the end, about the creative impulsion in his own work, said: "One writes out of one's moral sense; for the race, as it were."

Leavis then goes on to make the following comment, which seems to me to sum up the essence of a genuine moral vision:

"Moral" . . . is a difficult word and a necessary one. Lawrence's use of it here is special, but central and right. A great writer is a man impelled by a deep irresistible sense of responsibility, and he appeals to a deep sense of responsibility in us. A great work of art explores and evokes the grounds and sanctions of our most important choices, valuations and decisions—those decisions which are not acts of will, but are so important that they seem to make themselves rather than to be made by us.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Leavis, xviii f.



A distinction that needs to be made for the development of this conception of morality into something that can become the basis of practical choosing, is between the "false" community of the state or the collectivity, and the "true" community of mankind as a whole. The conflict is not between the individual and the whole community, but rather between the individual and the society to which he happens to be legally subject. A morality which tries to reconcile the individual and the community can only succeed at the price of being potentially subversive of all empirical, man-made societies. It is necessarily, in the political sense, a morality of protest against the pretensions of the self-sufficient state.

It is here that a serious catholic attempt to reconcile the moral tensions characteristic of our age (as distinct from merely papering over the cracks, as in the "official" position) must lead towards a socialist conception of our political needs. For one can say that the basic thesis of socialism is that the interests of the individual and the community *are* at bottom identical. But this thesis is not that "identity of interests" superficially *asserted* in one kind of utilitarian tradition, on the basis of a contract theory of society. It is exactly the opposite: namely the result of a philosophical analysis of man's very condition, as given to him primordially. We are both social and indi-

vidual, to the very roots of our being. Inescapably involved in such a position is a debt to Marx. Inescapably involved also is an understanding that, just because this reconciliation of the social and the individual is possible only at the level of the community of mankind, and not at the level of any one empirical political community, the reconciliation is not something invented by human wisdom but is *given* along with our very existence. It is something discovered, not invented, and is therefore the basis of moral demands which override the considerations of political expediency.

2. At this point another source of tension between the radical and the "moderniser" reveals itself. For, faced by the prospect of this socialist moral commitment (which is both conservative and subversive, as all radicalism must be), the moderniser's reaction is to fly into the arms of the sociologist. Sociology then becomes a substitute for socialism. In order to avoid having to face choices, the moderniser allows himself to be distracted by a pressure for more and more facts.

Stuart Hall, in the article already alluded to, has pointed out how a frantic search for sociological fact and scientific description has replaced genuine political debate about the choices which are open to our society. For good policy, of course, a sound basis of factual knowledge is essential. Nobody

seriously disputes this, least of all the radical. But one of the significant elements in the present discussion is that facts are politically neutral, and cannot dictate policy. This is why they are so useful to the moderniser, because a policy is just what he wants to avoid at all costs. As Douglas Woodruff has aptly pointed out, in *The Tablet* of 18 September 1965: "British Governments, when a problem rears its ugly head, generally appoint a commission to give themselves a breathing space"—until the next problem comes along to give them yet another, and so on ad infinitum. He also, rightly, pointed out at the same time that the church too was beginning to follow this path, and that as a result "Parkinson's law will set in, with the creation of new positions for aspiring ecclesiastics . . . proof . . . that the Church is dynamic and keeping up with the modern world". (It is characteristic of radicalism that it can so wholeheartedly agree, at times, with this kind of conservative comment.)

Now the cultivation of value-free sociological enquiry is one of the most ambiguous recent developments of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain. Of course, insofar as it is beginning to replace the (uninspired) guesswork of the past, such enquiry into the condition of schools, religious houses, parishes and (God willing) curial offices, is, obviously, an enormous step forward. It has the power to topple established prejudices as nothing



else can. But the welcome it is now receiving at last is not only due to its capacity to prove conclusively the inadequacies of the old methods. It is also because, having done so, it leaves the whole apparatus of decision exactly where it was before. It appeals, for this reason, to all sides, and helps to bolster up the illusion that everybody is in basic agreement about the fundamental issues. For as long as we are all in pursuit of facts, and are holding our values and personal commitments in abeyance, nothing much can happen except on paper. Only if the facts are put to use, in the formulation of policies and the taking up of options, can they do any damage to the moderniser's position. He can safely welcome then, indeed, as part of the great common search for the truth which will set us all free.

Yet the situation is more complex than this suggests, because of the fluidity of the factual situation itself and the constant danger of an ideologically-controlled science taking hold of our freedom. It is easier to make the point about the illusory nature of the unanimous agreement to use sociological enquiry, than it is to pin-point in detail the particular abuses. For though sociology as a discipline is value-free, or tries to be, sociologists are not and should not try. Sociology as a tool, therefore, is an apt instrument for the moderniser to play upon, but the sociologists themselves are



ranged upon different sides and offer their different commitments for acceptance or rejection. There is not an "us-them" distinction to be drawn between the sociologists and "ourselves". The beast is us—as Simon discovered, to his own cost in *The Lord of the Flies*—and has to be tamed by us. Values and facts are intimately entwined, and we cannot escape the demands made upon us by the sheer subtlety of the situation.

3. To enter upon a sociological enquiry, instead of upon a policy (though the actual problem is seldom posable in such stark terms as these) is one of those pieces of empiricist "realism" which the moderniser most enjoys. It gives him the comforting feeling that someone is "getting on with the job", seeing that things are moving, ensuring that a dynamism of reform is building up. But when such an enquiry, or indeed any other piece of "practical" action is undertaken in common with Christians of another tradition, in the spirit of "ecumenism", the illusion of progress is liable to be even more deeply comforting. For it is just such activity as this which seems to be most useful as a way through the impasse of denominational and theological disputes. And no doubt it is generally true that this is the case. Yet, to the radical there is a danger even here. Not for him the danger which "official" catholicism fears most—doctrinal corruption, detectable by the smell of scandal and the

prospect of harm to the illiterate—that is not in the forefront of the radical's mind. Traditional allegiances are not so easily broken, and in any case the scandals perpetrated by the faithful are no less damaging. The danger is rather the opposite—a cosy ganging up of the Christians in flight from the outside world.

Now this phenomenon is not to be confused with the "ghetto mentality" which is so contemptuously dismissed by the moderniser as part of a "history" he cannot understand. The ghetto mentality, though it is no doubt an anachronism, represents a long and often heroic struggle by a community trying to keep alive its own tradition. It presents, in a distorted and debased way, the image of something that was once a genuine and necessary response. It is the decayed embodiment of a culture. But the "cosiness" I am now discussing has none of the pristine strength of the ghetto. It is simply a *feeling* of community without the substance. It rests upon the false supposition that merely to "get together" is the beginning of a common life. Whereas the truth is that a genuine community—in the sense of a distinct historical group within the community of mankind as a whole—can only exist because of some common function which it exists to perform.

And in order to define this function it is necessary to define those historical forces or tendencies

which it opposes. A community can be defined by what it is against, as well as by what it is for. And if it is against nothing, then it is for nothing either, since for and against are the opposite sides of the same thing. But the merely "ecumenical" get-together is against nothing. That is its very *raison d'être*. It is completely open. (Only the church is truly open in this sense, and that is because it is a community founded by God, and not men.) An ecumenical get-together is therefore not a community, and it has no specific function. It simply exists. It cannot even witness to its own existence because it is not yet united. Thus, instead of being a creator of community life, the ecumenical movement is in danger of generating merely a party spirit—the spirit that is, of the Christmas party or the community sing-song, a gathering round a fire which illuminates and warms those nearby, but emphasises by its very intensity the distance between them and the outside world.

In emphasising this danger, the radical once more joins forces, paradoxically, with the traditional apologist. For they both agree that the most important task is that of making contact with the non-Christian world. It is not their objectives, only their methods that are different. The one wants to *confront* the world with a divine fiat performed once for all in the church, and the other wants to *understand* the divine will as present in the world itself.



True ecumenism, for the radical, is not just the Christian, and certainly not the official Christian, "get-together". It is the church's dialogue with the world, or rather (for this puts the church in too elevated a position) a dialogue which mankind is holding with itself. By comparison with the importance of trying to understand, and adopt what is of value in, the non-Christian world, the movement of official ecumenism among Christians often seems a feeble and insignificant growth. It is the difference and the common concerns that the radical catholicism shares with humanism and atheism that matter most.

But once more, this is an oversimplification. For it is necessary also to see that Christian ecumenism is itself a growth point in the dialogue mankind is conducting with itself. Growth starts in a small way, and often in unimportant places, under worn-out or forgotten heaps of rubbish. Even if the recognition of the danger in the ecumenical movement is valid, and important as a healthy corrective, it is nevertheless necessary to emphasise its possibilities for mankind as a whole. What is at issue, in the radical assessment of the ecumenical dialogue, is not its nature but its scale. Official ecumenism is not, to the radical, the all-absorbing Christian activity which it can easily become to the "modernist" believer.



The tendency of all these remarks is the same: to emphasise at the same time the complexity of our situation and the need for commitment despite it. But the commitment is not so much to specific courses of action which differ, dramatically, from those proposed by other "progressive" persons. It is rather to a shift of viewpoint from which to look at the problems that have to be faced. It is a change in "consciousness" (in the Marxist sense) that is the first concern of the radical Christian, and hence of *Slant* as a spokesman for his position. The moderniser's *proposals*, as such, are not necessarily in question, but his *policy* is. That is to say, what he suggests as remedies for our difficulties may, as separate suggestions, be parts of a genuine solution and a true path of progress. It is the lack of a foundation in theory, especially in moral, philosophical, and theological theory, that has to be attacked. Not, of course, for the sake of attack itself, but because the lack of theory is liable to rob the proposals of their practical value. The task of *Slant* therefore is to pursue the debate about the values and the theoretical foundations of Christianity at the theological level, and to carry it beyond this point into the outside world of politics and human culture. For it is in open debate that a tradition is examined, pruned and fertilised so that it may grow more strongly into the light and air.

The characteristic tone must be at once charitable and acid, intelligent and sympathetic, compassionate and yet provocative. It is hard to imagine a more difficult or a more important task.

## The church, sacrament of a socialist society/*Martin Redfern*

The contributors to this book share a position which, in essence, consists in the double assertion: first, that a full, fully conscious Christian commitment today entails commitment to a radical re-working of Christian theology in terms of the living political, cultural, and philosophical traditions of our society and time; and secondly, that this theologically radical commitment entails in its turn commitment to a radical position within those traditions. Contemporary Christianity, in other words, is intelligible only in theologically radical terms; and a consistent theological radicalism necessarily involves an understanding and

acceptance of the ideas and policies of the political and cultural left.

In the long run, of course, this "radical catholic" position will be defined in terms of what it produces, and justified by the results it achieves—by its ability to re-discover, make freshly relevant, and further develop the church's understanding of itself and of its mission to transform the world. And it cannot be over-emphasised that, over a period of little more than three years, there have been unmistakable signs that something like this is in fact happening: a number of important articles in *Slant* and other periodicals, and books like Brian Wicker's seminal *Culture and Liturgy*,<sup>1</sup> have already succeeded in defining the main planks of the position, and in demonstrating that it is capable of re-working and restating central theological themes in a positive and fruitful manner. Now, half-way through 1966, it seems clear that the position has not only established itself, but

<sup>1</sup> Brian Wicker, *Culture and Liturgy*, London 1963. It is this book which first argued the need for a radical catholicism, and which provided the first statement of a radical catholic position. Other recent books which, without necessarily having been written professedly from a "radical catholic" position, bear directly on this and related themes include: John Coulson (ed.), *Theology and the University*, London 1963; Theo Westow, *The Variety of Catholic Attitudes*, London 1963; Stanley Windass, *Christianity versus Violence*, London 1964; and Gordon Zahn, *German Catholics and Hitler's War*, London 1963.



established itself as the first stream of original and creative thinking to appear within British catholicism for many years.<sup>1</sup>

But this is claiming too much, and too soon. Moreover, although the position ultimately defines and justifies itself by what it does, in the shorter run there is also a need to show that there are a priori grounds for attempting to make this kind of re-working and re-statement of theological ideas at all. What I want to do in this essay, then, is to argue that such grounds do in fact exist—that the parallelism of self-understanding, commitment, and objectives between radical Christianity and radical socialism is so close that it can be explained only in terms of an organic connection between the two. The two complementary aspects of this connection, I shall suggest, can be expressed as

<sup>1</sup> *Slant* felt itself strong enough, in terms of subscriber support as well as of material available, to increase its annual issues from three to six from the beginning of 1966. *New Blackfriars*, the monthly journal of the English Dominican province, has in recent issues maintained a precisely parallel radical commitment. In 1967 there will be the first of an additional series of Downside symposia planned to concentrate on political and cultural subjects; and five new books, all written or edited consciously from this radical catholic position, are due to be published more or less simultaneously with this book (i.e., in spring 1966): Laurence Bright (ed.), *Christians and World Freedom*; Laurence Bright and Simon Clements (eds), *The Committed Church*; Terence Eagleton, *The New Left Church*; Walter Stein (ed.), *Peace on Earth: the Way Ahead*; and Brian Wicker, *Culture and Theology*.

follows: at this time, and in our situation, only the idea of a socialist society can give content and meaning to the Christian belief in the coming kingdom which Christ will establish at his return; and the main purpose of the church today is, by making present the eucharistic community of believers to society as a whole, to constitute the sacrament of this socialist society—the sacrament of community in the fullest, most profoundly human, most developed manner that we can yet conceive.

Two explanations need to be made in advance. First, I have traced this connection in terms of a radical theology and (largely) Marx's own—and particularly his early, more "philosophical"—writings for the sake of brevity and clarity. This does not mean that I believe the argument can or does stop here, since ultimately it must be worked out in terms of the detailed, contemporary Christian and socialist theory and practice—indeed, by dialogue and mutual interpenetration between the church and the socialist movement. This will be a more important, and a more difficult, task; but the lesser task which I have set myself here is probably a necessary, and certainly a helpful, preliminary. Secondly, I have assumed rather than argued the truth and authenticity of a radical theology as representative of Christianity. For some time now, I think it is fair to say, virtually all

original and creative theological writing has been more or less radical, even if it has all too often failed to draw the full "political" consequences of its theological radicalism. At any rate, various contemporary theologians have—whether explicitly or implicitly—made such comprehensive and debilitating critiques of the formalism, emptiness, and irrelevance of the more conservative theologies, that these last must now demonstrate both that they have understood and can meet this critique, and that they still have something meaningful to say, before they need again be discussed or considered in detail.

It is important that, from the very outset, the far-reaching nature of the radical catholic claim, and the insistence with which it is asserted, should not be underplayed. For the claim is not simply that, just as other Christians see their commitment in terms of a wide variety of other political standpoints, or even of no particular standpoint at all, so radical catholics see it in terms of commitment to the policies of the socialist, unilateralist, and internationalist left. It is not even, simply, the claim that Christianity can today be realised only in political terms, and at that in political terms which coincide with the objectives and programmes of the left. The full claim is stronger than either of these: namely that, at this time and in



this society and world, it is only in these radical socialist terms that Christianity is any longer intelligible and meaningful, let alone realisable. And—it can be agreed by those who do not share the position, as well as by those who do—this claim is strong enough to require some substantiation.

There is, of course, a sense in which Christianity has a built-in orientation towards socialism. The old and new testament insistence on the special role of the poor and oppressed, the radical morality of the beatitudes, the apparently anarchic principle of the utter freedom of enslavement to Christ which was formulated by Paul, the communism of the early churches—on any reading, these show a greater affinity with the objectives of contemporary socialist parties than with those of other parties. And this is important. But, nevertheless, it is not by the spelling out and working out of individual instances of apparent agreement such as these that the radical catholic claim can be justified: for, in the first place, the fundamental and almost complete differences between contemporary industrial society and the society of the first-century Roman empire render any such verbal comparisons of extremely doubtful validity<sup>1</sup>; and, in the second

<sup>1</sup> Socialist thinkers have not been slow to repudiate such a connection. See the quotation from Rosa Luxemburg at the beginning of chapter 6, "The failure of the Christian



place, no contingent, static connections of this order could begin to construct the required fundamental and organic connection between Christianity as a movement and socialism as a movement.

It is therefore in this area of Christianity and socialism both seen as essentially historical movements that the justification must be attempted. It must be shown that Christianity, fully conscious of itself as the history of God's salvation of and through his people, is, at this particular stage of that history, co-extensive with a radical socialism similarly conscious of itself as the history of a whole society's—a whole humanity's—self-liberation and self-emancipation. And, without pretending to make all the necessary links, I want to suggest that there are at least three basic and central elements in Christianity's contemporary understanding of itself which can only be given any plausible kind of "cash value" in terms of the self-understanding of socialism.

revolution", above, pp. 83f.; and this pointed comment of Marx and Engels, in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848: "Nothing is easier than to give Christianity asceticism a socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property, against marriage, against the state? Has it not preached, in the place of these, charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monastic life and Mother Church? Christian socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat."

### 1. *The historical dimension*

Christianity is, in a double sense, fundamentally a religion of history: first, because it is embodied in the history of a continuing people, the old Israel and the new, and indeed is essentially *about* the history of that people's encounter with its God; and secondly, because its own understanding of that history is itself part of the history, at every stage developing out of the past history and structuring it, and at every stage shaping the future of that history. Christianity, then, is a continuing, linear history with a past, a present, and a future; and, unlike (say) neo-Thomism, which proposes itself as in some sense a complete and exhaustive systematisation of Christian doctrine in propositional forms conceived as true for all time, authentic Christian theology is aware of itself as historically limited and developing.<sup>1</sup>

In both respects, of course, socialism offers a close parallel. For socialism is nothing if not a movement—the embodiment of an interpretation, a structuring, of present-day industrial society in

<sup>1</sup> The idea is well expressed by the Dutch theologian, Piet Schoonenberg, sj: "Theology stands in history, not in eternity. Theologians who thought they wrote for all time show, through that very fact, that they were historically conditioned. . . . Today we are aware of practising theology in today's situation. We try to remain faithful to the message of salvation precisely by translating it for this, our own, time". (*Man and Sin*, London 1965, 192.)

terms of a primitive communist and feudal past, of a capitalist present, and of an increasingly and ultimately completely socialist future. But it is an interpretation which arises out of and issues in the history which it interprets: socialist theory—in the Marxian tradition, at least—sees itself, as does authentic Christian theology, as developing out of and in turn shaping the history with which it is concerned.

But, once again, this is to make the connection too hastily. What is required here is not simply a demonstration of close similarity in methodology and historical self-understanding between Christianity and socialism, but also and simultaneously a demonstration of close similarity of *content* in these Christian and socialist histories—a demonstration that, in a real sense, they share a view of the world and mankind, and that they only share a methodology because they first share an understanding of and commitment to the world which they then, necessarily, interpret and structure in similar ways.

This close similarity is most clearly shown, I think, in terms of the fundamental correspondence between Christianity understood as the history of the "sin of the world" and of the world's salvation from that sin, and socialism understood as the history of man's alienation and of his emancipation from that alienation. By this correspondence I do



not want to suggest that these two histories are in some way interchangeable, or that the relationship between them is reciprocal; on the contrary, whereas socialism is—from this Christian standpoint—the authentic contemporary form and expression of the working out of the Christian history, Christianity must today (but not in the past, nor necessarily in some distant future) be understood as the sacrament of socialist history. But, nevertheless, the correspondence between them is, I believe, an organic correspondence. Let me now try to point this by means of a brief, and unavoidably over-schematic, juxtaposition of the two historical viewpoints.

a. As Christians, we stand—and are conscious of standing—at a particular point in the history of the people whom God has called together as his special people. This history began some 3,000 or more years ago, when a small group of Semites escaped from slavery in Egypt and, after a period of wandering, found their own land. It was this event which constituted them—us—as a people, and as a believing people. “Even the earliest avowals to Yahweh”, writes Gerhard von Rad, “were historically determined, that is, they connect the name of this God with some statement about an action in history. Yahweh, ‘who brought Israel out of Egypt’, is probably the earliest and at



the same time the most widely used of these confessional formulae."<sup>1</sup>

This historical event of physical salvation from physical slavery became the focal point around which the Israelites came to see the whole of their own and all human history revolve, and in terms of which they came to understand that history, and to project it both back into the past and forward into the future. The salvation experienced in that exodus from Egypt provided the key to their understanding, not only of the "saving acts" of the election of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but also of Yahweh's initial saving act in his creation of the world and mankind; and moreover of the other saving acts—principally, the return from the exile in Babylon—which the people were to experience later in their history. Similarly, the oppression from which the exodus saved them provided the key to their historical, existential understanding of the "sin of the world"; for the whole fall story—the story of Adam's sin, and of its spreading outwards and downwards through primeval history—was not simply a "mythological" account of man's rejection of God's initial saving

<sup>1</sup> G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 1, Edinburgh 1962, 121. The great credal formula of Dt 26:5-9 ("A wandering Aramean was my father . . ."), which is very early, shows more than any other both the essentially historical basis of Israelite faith in Yahweh, and the fact that the exodus-event was the central element of this historical basis.

act of creation, but at the same time an explanation of the evident, unmistakable, "unaccountable" oppression and suffering of men in the then known world.

Later on this existential conviction of "sin" and of salvation from sin developed still further. Even in the darkest period of Israel and Judah, the faith always remained that the God who had brought his people out of Egypt would in the last days confirm and seal that action with a final, definitive saving act. That act, we as Christians believe, was Christ's. For, by suffering and dying, Christ was made one with mankind gripped under this "sin of the world", of which death is the sharpest, most obvious, most poignant expression. By being raised again from the dead, Christ demonstrated—to those who believe, and against appearances—that the victory over sin and death has been effected once for all. And, as I shall go on to argue, we can make no complete or even coherent sense of our belief unless we understand "sin" in terms of the forces which work against the achievement of a socialist society, and "salvation" as the achievement of a socialist society.

- b. [It] is not and cannot be a new philosophy of history or a new method; but it is properly this: *a mass of new data, of new experiences*, of which the historian becomes conscious. . . . [This] view of

history arose out of the need to account for a definite social phenomenon, not from an abstract inquiry into the factors of historical life.

This could easily have been written by a Christian at any time in the last twenty or thirty years of salvation history; but in fact it was written by Benedetto Croce as long ago as 1896, of historical materialism.<sup>1</sup> The "definite social phenomenon", therefore, is neither the first people of God constituted by the exodus-event, nor the new people of God constituted by the Christ-event, but rather the proletariat constituted as conscious of itself by the French Revolution. The "mass of new data, of new experiences" is not a reference to the divine saving acts of Jewish-Christian history and the Jewish-Christian experience of them, but rather a reference to the events of human emancipation as seen in socialist history by socialist experience.

The parallelism is striking enough for us to be able to say that there is an internal and organic connection between the Christian and socialist histories—a connection of content as well as of method. Let us look briefly at just two points of this interconnection. First, in both cases the history is essentially human, humanist history; and

<sup>1</sup> B. Croce, *Historical Materialism and the Economics of Karl Marx*, London 1913, 12 and 16-17 (quoted by T. B. Bottomore [ed.], *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, London 1963, xi). Croce himself, of course, was neither a Christian nor a Marxist.



yet it is, at the same time, the history of man in relation to the natural world, to creation as a whole. In the Jewish-Christian view, creation was the creation of the whole natural universe, culminating in the creation of man-and-woman (Gn 1). The fall broke the intended harmony between man and nature (Gn 3:17-19), as well as between man and man; though later on the prophets, and especially Isaiah, came to expect that in the last days harmony would be re-established between the two (Is 11:6, among others). And of course Christ did, as we believe, re-establish this harmony:

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross [Col 1:19-20.]

For Marx, too, the essential involvement of man in nature, and his emergence from nature, are important, key themes. "The whole of what is called world history is nothing but the creation of man by human labour, and the emergence of nature for man," he wrote in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844); and so "history itself is a real part of natural history, of the development of nature into man".<sup>1</sup> And, for Marx,

<sup>1</sup> Bottomore, 166 and 164.



this basic link between man and nature is made by the fact of human labour; for, according to him, it was by the capacity for labour that man first emerged from nature, and it is by labour that man is now involved in and related to nature. "Industry is the actual historical relationship of nature, and thus of natural science, to man."<sup>1</sup>

But of course—and this brings me to the second point of interconnection—the distortion and disorientation of this essential harmony between man and nature, due to the alienation of human labour, was for Marx the basic evil of the contemporary human situation which cried out for eradication—in Christian terms, the existential fall-situation which demanded a redemption. The root cause of this alienation of man from himself and from his fellow men, in his work, is the division of "the whole of society . . . into the two classes of property owners and property-less workers"<sup>2</sup>; and the alienation applies to both classes, capitalist and proletarian, alike. But in what, for the worker, does this alienation consist?

First, that the work is external to the worker, that it is not part of his nature; and that, consequently, he does not fulfil himself in his work but denies himself. . . . His work . . . is not the satis-

<sup>1</sup> Bottomore, 163.

<sup>2</sup> Bottomore, 120.

faction of a need, but only the means for satisfying other needs. . . . Finally, the external character of work for the worker is shown by the fact that it is not his own work but work for someone else, that in work he does not belong to himself but to another person.<sup>1</sup>

This is a profound and penetrating analysis of the fundamental reasons for man's disorientation and alienation in his work in modern industrial society, and it applies as much to contemporary neo-capitalism as it did to the capitalism of Marx's own time. Against it, the various attempts to "improve working conditions", or to emphasise increasing and richer leisure activity as a medicine for the persisting inhumanity of so much human labour, show up as the superficial, escapist evasions that they are. Moreover, to have seen that it was this alienation in work that lay at the root of all the injustice and tension of modern society was an insight of the first importance. But the point I really want to draw out here is this: how can we, as Christians, interpret Marx's analysis and condemnation of human alienation in work, and his convictions of the coming "emancipation of society from private property, from servitude",<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bottomore, 124 f. See also chapter 3, "Work", above, pp. 16-22.

<sup>2</sup> Bottomore, 132.

except in Christian terms of the "sin of the world" and of salvation from that sin? Or, to put it the other way round, and even more forcibly: can we, as Christians living in the capitalist society of today, give any concrete meaning to our professed belief in the radical and far-reaching nature of the fall, and in the equally radical nature of Christ's redemption of mankind from the fall-situation, unless it be in terms—at least partially—of Marxian alienation and emancipation?

Let us be quite clear about this. Our faith is meaningful and intelligible to us only in terms of our own experience, just as it was only revealed in the first place in terms of the human experience of the Jews and early Christians. "God's self-disclosure . . . is expressed in the form of a human knowledge of what is revealed, and thus essentially contains a reference to man's experience of his own existence", as Schillebeeckx has put it.<sup>1</sup> What was originally expressed through the then contemporary human knowledge and experience must, if we are to understand it at all ourselves, be translated into the framework of our own, utterly different, knowledge and experience. And, I suggest, this necessary translation must involve, as a primary and

<sup>1</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Marriage: Secular Reality and Saving Mystery*, 1, London 1965, 60.



fundamental element, the Marxian analysis, critique, and programme for contemporary capitalist society. There are other elements, of course: aspects of the contemporary "sin of the world" such as racialism, sexual inequality, and disease are not (I think) wholly accounted for by the concept of human alienation in work based on class division; and the contemporary working out of salvation must include medical, social-psychological, and other factors, as well as political thought and action. But, basically, our place in salvation history can be fully lived and fully understood only as "repentance for" (that is, honest recognition of) the basic division and alienation of man in work, and through work in all his social relations; and as "belief in" (that is, effort based on the expectation of) Christ's coming to emancipate all mankind from its servitude through the creation of a fully human, socialist society, his "kingdom".

## *2. Commitment to the world*

I have discussed this first, historical aspect of organic interconnection between Christianity and socialism at some length for two reasons. In the first place, I believe that a major element in making the interconnection at all is this fact that both are, in a real sense, histories embodied in



peoples, and both histories of sin and salvation. But my second reason is more practical. In the course of what I have already said, I have introduced my two other themes of interconnection: for this parallelism of historical self-understanding which exists between Christianity and socialism depends, not only on their shared analysis of the meaning of past history and the direction of future history, but on their agreement that the very *raison d'être* of themselves as movements is their utter commitment to the world, and that this commitment is directed at the ultimate unity of all mankind.

On the first of these two themes, that of commitment to the world, I need waste little space in showing that both the old and the new Israel have seen their special election by God as being for the world's sake, and not their own. "It is too light a thing," sang second Isaiah, "that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth" (Is 49:6). And he was twice quoted by Luke (Lk 2:32 and Ac 13:47) for the new Israel, the church. Our mission is to witness to the whole world, "to make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19); to preach the gospel of salvation to

all men, and to constitute the sacramental community of salvation of the whole world.

For my immediate purpose here, then, I shall assume this, and go straight on to draw out the essential and fruitful tension inherent in Christianity's sacramental insight into its commitment to the world; and then to suggest—what may at first sight seem improbable—that the authentic Christian understanding of Christian commitment to the world is closely similar to Marx's understanding of the "necessity of atheism", and excludes precisely what Marx meant by "religion".

This sacramental tension is the tension between the tangible, secular, factual "thing" which constitutes the sacrament and is the visible vehicle of its visible signification, and the salvation-history "thing" which is effected through it—that is, in this case, between the church as human, existent community here and now making present (signifying) the eschatological kingdom in the liturgy, and the eschatological kingdom itself which it is actually bringing about (at least in the sense that this is what it is tending to; and that, when Christ establishes his "heavenly" community on earth, this sacramental community ceases both to have meaning and even to exist). But this point needs some elaboration. In the new testament, the church's sacramentality is shown in a rich variety of images, each of which is in the last resort neces-

sary to a complete and whole view. Thus it is shown as the body of Christ; the bride of Christ; the collegial community of the twelve, and then of the one hundred and twenty; the eucharistic fellowship; the priestly people; the new Israel and the new Jerusalem; and so on. But, for the purpose of illustrating this sacramental "tension", I will use the image of the church as the community of brothers in Christ, unified by their common sonship of the one Father; for the German theologian Ratzinger has recently discussed the tension in terms of this image,<sup>1</sup> and it has the added advantage of an obvious affinity to Marxian and other non-Christian conceptions of "human brotherhood", "fraternal society", and the like.

This Christian brotherhood is both "open" and "closed". It is "closed" because it is the close-knit, visible community of those called into membership of it by Christ and professing his name; and because it must be close-knit if it is to be visible and capable of signifying at all. But at the same time it is constantly open, because all men are called to membership of it; and indeed—which is where the tension arises—it must be open in order to achieve what, as a "closed" community, it signifies, that is, the brotherhood of all men. The

<sup>1</sup> J. Ratzinger, *Christian Brotherhood*, London 1966. The account which follows is, nevertheless, my own, not Ratzinger's.



community of Christian brothers, therefore, is "closed" only in order to be the sacramental sign of its "opposite", the open brotherhood of all men; but in proportion as it succeeds in realising what it signifies, and what it exists in order to realise, it ceases to be either "closed" or a sign. In short, the church is there only to serve the world; and, insofar as it does serve the world, it becomes one with the world, and to that extent ceases to be "church".<sup>1</sup>

I labour this point, not simply to underline the generally agreed view that Christianity involves (among other things) a commitment *to* the world, but rather to suggest as well that Christianity means nothing at all unless it means utter commitment both *to* and *in* the world. If the church's *raison d'être* is to be the sacrament of the universal brotherhood of mankind, then clearly it cannot be concerned with special Christian interests (catholic schools, the "position of influence" afforded by establishment status, the "preservation of moral standards", etc.), but only with the true interests of all mankind. But—still more important to emphasise, because less generally admitted—if the church as liturgical community is not only the sign

<sup>1</sup> The converse is not true, however: for, insofar as the church fails to serve the world, it not only fails to progress towards the realisation of the eschatological universal brotherhood it signifies (by making sacramentally present here and now) but fails even to signify, and so to have any point at all.



of this eschatological brotherhood, but the present means through which that brotherhood should eventually be achieved, then equally clearly it cannot avoid being committed to those political movements in the world which are working towards brotherhood, and against those which are working against it. In other words, Christianity is, in very essence, about politics, and not about religion—about this world, and no other.

And this, of course, is to all intents and purposes the point of Marx's critique of religion. Following Feuerbach, he saw the Christianity of his day—and, it must be confessed, Christianity as it still is today to far too great an extent—as no more than a flight from the real world into another, make-believe, escape world. But he went further and deeper than Feuerbach:

The fact that the secular basis deserts its own sphere and establishes an independent realm in the clouds, can only be explained by the self-contradictions within this secular basis. The latter, therefore, must itself be both understood in its contradictions and revolutionised in practice. [*Theses on Feuerbach*, 4.<sup>1</sup>]

Marx's atheism was not—as Christians tend to

<sup>1</sup> T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings in Sociology and Social Philosophy*, London 1963<sup>2</sup>, 83.

assume all atheism must be—a conscious rejection of the saving God; it was rather a conscious, and necessary, rejection of “religion” in the sense I used it above—that is, of an unauthentic Christianity which sees itself as concerned in a withdrawal from the real world to an escape world, rather than in a wholehearted and complete involvement in the real world. The full context of the most famous quotation from Marx on the subject of religion makes this quite clear:

Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of men, is a demand for their real happiness. The call to abandon their illusions is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions. [*Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.<sup>1</sup>]

Here, once again, is the connection. As Christians, we know that our commitment is to and in the world—that it is to the world we are called, and, within the world, to those who are building up the community of all mankind. Indeed, it is in our common Christian mission in the world that

<sup>1</sup> Bottomore, *Early Writings*, 43 f.

we encounter our God. There is no private hotline between us as individuals and God; until we meet him face to face, we meet him only in the community of the church—the community which is, in one aspect, the whole of mankind, and, in the other aspect, the living presence of the future “fraternal society” of all mankind in the here-and-now world, that is, the church. It is in the real world, the world of real people with real problems, that we exist and have our purpose, whether as human beings or as Christians. And so we are, in the sense that Marx proclaimed himself to be, “atheist”; for we too renounce and repudiate escape from the real world, while at the same time having compassion for those who feel the need to escape—active compassion, which seeks to understand and then cure the causes of the suffering, and not a passive or emotional compassion which would only treat the symptoms.

Yet even this suggests a false motivation—suggests that we, as Christians, may also involve ourselves in the world, but only to “save our souls”. Rather must we see it this way: it is only by the genuine, human movement of “repentance”, of the pre-faith frank recognition and repudiation of the world’s suffering, that we can come to the community of faith at all; and any man who “repents” in this way, any man who looks, sees, and commits himself to the real world,



thereby enters the community of faith, whether he makes this faith explicit or not. In short, as Christians we see, after the event of faith, that it was only through a pre-faith commitment to the world that we could have entered the community of faith; and that, in the sense that this commitment to the world is "atheism", only through "atheism" that we have or could have entered.

### 3. *The movement to world unity*

This takes me on to the third and last linking theme, in which I want to draw out a particular aspect of the connection between the Christian and socialist commitments to the achievement of the unity of all mankind.

The Christian community is, as we have seen, the place of our encounter with God; and at the same time it is the sacrament of the whole world's salvation. Indeed, in one sense, the church is already what it is potentially, the whole community of mankind; and, conversely, as Rahner has said, "there [is] . . . a 'people of God' which extends as far as humanity itself, . . . [and] membership of the people of God is one of the determining factors of a concrete human nature".<sup>1</sup> This means that, as believing Christians, we can-

<sup>1</sup> K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 2, London 1963, 83 f.



not understand any actualised community of men except in terms of its membership of and expression of the church, the special people of God; and more, we cannot even understand our own, professing membership of this special people of God except in terms of the full social and individual humanity which we share with all mankind, the people of God at large.

This has important implications, both theoretical and practical. The theoretical implication is this: it follows that we as Christians have the task of eradicating all factors which divide society and mankind against themselves, whether these divisions are political, economic, educational, sexual, religious, or any other; it follows, too, that we have the task to build up that unified society of all mankind which is the church's function in the world. This means that we are, willy nilly, committed in advance on all issues of segregation or unification; so that, on the issue of the dominant divisive factor in our own society—that of the deep-seated, far-reaching division into the two classes of capital and labour—we are committed in advance to its eradication. And commitment to the end, let it be added, is commitment to some means or other—which immediately raises the first practical implication, for the means in question must be primarily that proposed by Marx, namely, the emancipation of the exploited class of the workers. I will not

dwell on this point, except to say that—in contradiction to the interpretation often placed on him by opponents, and even by other socialists—Marx clearly saw this proletarian emancipation as involving the emancipation and unification of all classes and men. As he wrote in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*,

... the emancipation of society from private property, from servitude, takes the political form of the emancipation of the workers; not in the sense that only the latter's emancipation is involved, but because this emancipation includes the emancipation of humanity as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

But this practical implication has another, more immediately practical, aspect. Let me draw to a close by suggesting that there are at least three serious difficulties in the way of our subscribing—as Christians, that is, and therefore committed to the unification of mankind—to the dominant political philosophy of the western liberal democracies.

This predominant philosophy takes the form of a belief in the fundamental and lasting importance of our existing democratic political institutions. Our "western way of life", our security, and our freedom are all held to depend on the parliamentary democratic system, understood as the free

<sup>1</sup> Bottomore, *Early Writings*, 132.

and competitive play of one political party against another. This is a belief shared by most parliamentary and other members of all three main political parties in this country: the average Labour, Liberal, and Conservative MP, while always being naturally prejudiced in favour of his own party, nevertheless professes a loud and doubtless sincere belief in the "party system"—in the system whereby the party in power at any given time is "counterbalanced" by the other party or parties, and political power alternates between two or more parties.

What, then, are the difficulties a Christian faces in acquiescing in this general political philosophy?

a. The first difficulty is that the philosophy conceives democracy in narrowly party-political terms, and even then only in a strictly limited sense. Since the achievement of universal suffrage in this country, there has been no evolution whatsoever towards a fuller, more participative form of democracy. Even the vote for women, or the now canvassed probability of a vote for eighteen-year-olds, are not developments, but simply re-definitions of the term "universal". As an electorate we have power only to choose between offered alternatives; we have no say at all in the formulation of policy, except in the sense that policy will always be tailored to the minimum



degree estimated by the parties as necessary for them to win or maintain a parliamentary majority; and indeed, we do not even have a direct say in the important political decisions which affect every aspect of our daily lives, locally, regionally, and nationally.

And of course, outside the political sphere, there is as yet not so much as an element of even elective democracy in the economic, cultural, or—let us admit it—church spheres. In short, for a society which voices repeatedly a strong belief in the basic importance of democracy, we accept a surprisingly limited interpretation of its meaning and surprisingly restricted idea of its proper field of play—for a Christian, surely too limited an interpretation, too restricted a field.

b. The second difficulty is that this liberal-democratic philosophy is dangerously unaware of its historical causes and its geographical circumscription—unaware that it is an essentially static philosophy maintained in an inevitably changing world. This means, among other things, that it is incapable of providing the conceptual framework within which it can understand and interpret the political institutions of other, non-western, non-liberal-democratic societies; for, in its own terms, contemporary political forms must be either “democratic” after its own pattern, and therefore



acceptable, or "totalitarian", and therefore to be rejected. This is a categorisation too blunt and too blinkered to be satisfactory; and yet it is currently, in most of the western world, the unquestioned basis of the political policies and attitudes adopted on international affairs. It is for this reason, I suggest, that present official western attitudes on Vietnam, Aden, Rhodesia, and indeed on the third world and on the communist world as a whole, while often showing acute diplomatic and sophisticated technical abilities, nevertheless betray a fundamental failure to understand that societies can be fully human, authentic, maturing societies without being structured on the liberal-democratic model. Professor Macpherson has recently summarised this point concisely and clearly:

It cannot be too often recalled that liberal-democracy is strictly a capitalist phenomenon. Liberal-democratic institutions have appeared only in capitalist countries, and only after the free market and the liberal state have produced a working class conscious of its strength and insistent on a voice.<sup>1</sup>

c. But it is the last difficulty which I think is crucial for Christians. For, in the final analysis, belief

<sup>1</sup> C. W. Macpherson, "Post-Liberal-Democracy?", *New Left Review* 33 (September-October 1965), 6.

in the essential rightness of this prevailing liberal-democratic, party-political system is incompatible with the belief that it is our Christian task to build up a single community of our society and of mankind. If we take seriously this commitment to a unified, classless, undivided church and world, we cannot accept this present political structure as ultimately anything more than a stage on the way to the achievement of such a church and world. It cannot be an end in itself.

This is not to say, of course, that a "totalitarian" state is to be preferred to a liberal-democratic state, or that a regression to pre-liberal-democratic institutions is desirable. Rather, it is to argue that, as Christians, our commitment to the present political structures must be on the understanding that it is not to them as they now are, but to them as they are potentially—as structures capable of development and evolution from the present élitist, merely elective, narrowly party-political level, to a more radically democratic, participative level which would hold good throughout economic and cultural as well as political institutions. And so once again we find that it is a radical socialist interpretation and programme which offers us the theoretical and practical apparatus for the realisation of our Christian mission today; or, to put it more positively, it is the (overwhelmingly non-Christian) socialist movement which is today

working most effectively to realise the Christian objective of a united society and mankind.

### *Conclusion*

I have argued, then, that there is a close parallelism between radical Christian theology and radical socialist theory, in that both see themselves as fundamentally growing out of, interpreting, and in turn shaping the histories of their respective movements. That this parallelism is not simply accidental is demonstrated by the fact that the basic content of the two theories and histories is, in essence, the same: in Christian theology, the history is one of sin, and of the salvation of the whole world from that sin through the salvation of God's special people; in Marxian theory, the history is one of universal alienation, and of the emancipation of all men from that alienation through the emancipation of the workers. Moreover, there is a similar parallelism between the points of entry on to these two histories, and between the objectives to which they are understood as directed. In Christian terms, "repentance" for (that is, recognition and repudiation of) the sin situation is the pre-faith step that precedes entry into the community of faith, which is itself directed to the building up of the community of mankind. And, in socialist terms, an honest appraisal of the situa-



tion of alienated mankind precedes commitment to the world, and to the socialist movement whose objective is the emancipation of mankind from its alienation by the creation of a socialist society.

The two views, histories, and commitments are not interchangeable, or identical. Nor are they rivals. The relationship is, for a radical catholic, one of mutual complementarity: the socialist movement, and the goal of a socialist society, provides meaning—the only possible meaning—for the Christian understanding of the contemporary historical situation and the goal of Christian history. For him, the liturgical community of the church is the sacrament of socialism—the living presence of the eschatological socialist community in the contemporary world, and at once the sign of, and a means to, the realisation of that eschatological socialist community. To the non-Christian socialist, however, the church will not in the same way appear in a complementary role, precisely because it appears to him as a microcosm, not of the socialist movement, but of society as a whole—precisely because it is still, like the society-as-a-whole which determines its contemporary form and structure, dominated by outdated and reactionary institutions and ideologies.

But, insofar as a radical catholicism becomes a visible and active force in the church, the church can begin to appear—even to the non-Christian



socialist—as a token of, a living example of the practicability of, a classless, fully human, socialist society in process of evolving out of an alienated, dehumanised, capitalist society. We might even say this: if we live to see a society which is Christian in any whole and real sense, it will be because it is also a human, democratic, and socialist society. And, if we live to see a genuinely socialist society, it could yet be because the church has played the vital, catalysing role in the process. But this, of course, is to say that the sacrament will have given way to the reality—that we are looking further than we can really see, and glimpsing, through dark glasses, the kingdom—the socialist republic—of heaven.

## The structure of the church/*Laurence Bright, OP*

To most people the church is essentially authoritarian in a bad sense: a large body of people being told by a much smaller body what to think and do. Hence the incredulity about the claim made in this book that it is possible, even necessary, for catholics to be politically of the left; nothing is more natural than their traditional support throughout history for right-wing regimes. Yet the claim is theologically sound, and I think this will become apparent after the implications of the renewed theology, expressed officially at the recent council, have been more fully worked out. As yet it is impossible to do more than sketch the lines along which political thinking and theology will be brought together; the council's own attempt to do it in the *Constitution on the Church in the World of*

*Today* was not very successful. But the most important theological developments in the next decades will be in this area, and it is time a start was made. Does catholic theology have room for the political thinking put forward in this book, and which I here take for granted?

There are two questions to be discussed. The first concerns the relationship between the church (the body of believing Christians) and the world (all mankind). The second concerns the structure of the church itself, the relationship between the hierarchy (or the clergy in general) and the *laos* (the church as a whole). Since church and world have something in common the two questions are related. But theologians too often discuss the second of them without reference to the first, which is treated almost as peripheral. In this book we have done the opposite. We have been mainly concerned about the structures of the world, but the time has come to discuss how they affect the structures of the church. They do not determine them because each is determined—in a sense to be explained—by the same factor, more properly by the same person, the risen Christ. Perhaps this is a very obvious thing for a Christian to say, but the truth is that until recently our neglect of eschatology (the influence of Christ as our future on the present world) has meant that we have been unable to see it.

*The church in the world.* Even in the old testament it is recognised that all human history, not merely Israel's own, was in the hands of God. This was put most clearly by the author of Isaiah 40-55, writing in the mid-sixth century at the end of the Babylonian exile. Throughout this long poem, for instance, he frequently links together creation and redemption, placing God's special concern for Israel's history within the pattern of his concern for universal history, for "all things":

Thus says Yahweh your redeemer  
who formed you from the womb:  
I am Yahweh, who made all things.  
[Is 44:24]

It is even more striking in the passage where God appoints as his messiah or saviour-king the pagan Cyrus, responsible for ending the exile by reason of his enlightened colonial policy:

Thus says Yahweh to his anointed, to Cyrus . . .  
For the sake of my servant Jacob,  
and Israel my chosen,  
I call you by your name,  
I surname you, though you do not know me.  
[Is 45:1, 4]

The highpoints of the poem are the "servant-



songs" in which the prophet speaks of the effect of exile on Israel, Yahweh's servant, as having a redemptive value for the whole of mankind. The nations of the world recognise that

He was wounded for our transgressions,  
he was bruised for our iniquities,  
upon him was the chastisement that made  
us whole,  
and with his stripes we are healed.

[Is 53:5]

The order of thought is still from the centre outwards, from Israel to the world at large, naturally enough, since it is not easy to learn the lesson that we cannot exist in isolation.

Nevertheless the order is reversed in the new testament. In the last Pauline letters, for instance, all things are said to have been created and sustained in Christ, the image of God the Father, before the relationship of the church to him is mentioned. Since the idea is unfamiliar to us, we easily overlook it. Paul is talking about Christ as man (the "image" is taken up from Genesis, and is equivalent to the gospel expression "Son of Man" meaning prototype man). He is therefore saying that the created universe is not a setting alien to human history, nor is redemption something arbitrary and strange: the universe was made for man, and man for Christ's intervention:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation; for in him all things were created . . . through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. . . . [Col 1:15-18.]

The picture given by these letters is of men moving through history towards Christ as end point, yet even now sharing and living by his life, however imperfectly. "In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col 1:19), and yet much is still lacking to his church (1:24). But the important point for us again is that it is not merely the church but all mankind who are seen as centred in this way on the risen Lord:

[God] has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. [Eph 1:9-10.]

In the church men recognise the source of their life, but whether or not men recognise it, it is still offered to them. The same point is made in the parable of the last judgement:

Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee? And the king will answer them, Truly I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. [Mt 25:38-40.]

To accept this perspective is to have eliminated the idea of two separate entities externally related, church and world. The whole world is God's kingdom, even though this is explicitly recognised only by a part of it, the church.

*The kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God.* As the parable just quoted goes on to show, scripture *does* distinguish two worlds, the world which accepts Christ's gift of his renewed life and the world which rejects it—a world of good and a world of evil. But there is no question of identifying the one with the church, the other with non-Christians or even non-catholics, as has sometimes happened. The language of scripture, which would make this clear, is resistant to demythologisation at this point: it uses the angelic creation, yet modern man has little time for angels, "whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers". If however we are prepared to take the general ideas seriously, they give a rather subtle picture, as Oscar Cullmann



in particular has shown.<sup>1</sup> For late Jewish thought every earthly power was associated with angelic power, and some of these at least were in rebellion against God. By his resurrection-ascension Christ has subjected these powers to himself, and brought them for the most part to be agencies of good, but, being free, they can always escape into rebellion before the last day. Secular power is by and large good, that is to say, but it may mysteriously become evil from time to time—the regimes of Hitler or Ian Smith would be modern examples. A “kingdom of Satan” exists, and in the Johannine writings it is often called, misleadingly to us, “the world”, but it is not easily identifiable, and is certainly not the non-Christian world. It shifts and changes.

But leaving aside now this “kingdom of Satan” we are left with a world of men, who may or may not be Christian, who remain open to the gift of life from God in Christ, brought by the Holy Spirit, yet who from time to time close themselves off from it, falling into sin. As earlier chapters of the book show, this sinfulness is primarily to be understood in community terms rather than individual ones; it shows itself in a regard for sectional interests as against those of the whole. The ideal would be a world in which no class or race is privileged, in which:

<sup>1</sup> For example, in *Christ and Time*, London 1951, III, 3.



there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus [Gal 3:28.]

That this ideal is unattainable before the last day does not excuse anyone from striving to attain it, through co-operation with Christ, by helping to build up a common world, a community that has regard for the interests of all. The Christian has less excuse than others, because he knows this explicitly. Though the church is scattered in the world, it remains the city set on a hill, the image of what will be the case in heaven and what should be the case now. Yet the church, made up of sinful men, is always failing and always in need of reformation. The divisions that exist within her must not obscure her fundamental unity if she is to fulfil this function of eschatological image within the total economy of salvation.

*Liturgy as producing the structures of world and church.*  
The divisions between denominations within the Christian community is one for which no excuse can be made; until they have been broken down Christendom remains ineffectual as a model for a world in which racial and class divisions have to be destroyed. These divisions are now generally recognised for the scandal they are, and the ecumenical movement, so characteristic of our

day, is actively working to remove them. I shall not expand this point because for the most part all Christians agree about it; only the means are in question.

What on the other hand has to be discussed is the structure of the church itself, the divisions within the whole, which far from being the effect of sin, as are the divisions between communions, are an essential characteristic, at least for catholic theology. Do they necessarily diminish the effectiveness of the church's image? This discussion will at the same time take what has been said about the structure of the world a stage further. So far I have spoken of it only in terms of knowledge, the explicit recognition by the Christian body of the source of the world's life. The structure of the world (the division of church and world within God's kingdom) and the structure of the church (the hierarchical division) depend on one other because each is given through the relationship between mankind and God, in the risen Christ. When this is misunderstood through the neglect of the eschatological element in theology, so that Christ in his distinction from the Father is thought of only as a figure in the past, then both divisions are either lost altogether, as has sometimes happened in protestant theology, or are conceived in juridical terms and become too absolute, as has happened in some catholic thought.

We can best approach this question by looking at the characteristic activities by which men are opened to union with Christ. World and church alike receive all from him, and become in measure what he now is; not fully, because until the last day sin reduces our receptivity, and in any case because this is a gift, belonging by right only to him. Fundamentally the gift is his life, united by love to the Father, because fundamentally he is the representative man who has turned us back to God, and this is for all; men are saved through a life that is expressed, where this is possible, by moral action. Such action is the basic salvific activity for all alike because it is the way men relate together, making community.

The church, however, is specifically constituted within the world by a further activity, the celebration of sacramental liturgy. Provided that there is no antithesis between these two activities, for it is still true that God "cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly" (Is 1:13), the liturgy is the principal means by which the church is opened to the saving life of Christ. More important for our present purpose, it is also the means by which the church is further characterised by gifts the world does not have, though they are to be used for the world. Liturgy therefore distinguishes church and world; moreover, as we shall see, it distinguishes layman and cleric within the church. Looked at in



this way, it becomes clear that the different ways in which cleric and layman exercise these specific Christian characteristics should no more obscure the fundamental truth that each has been given them, than the different ways in which church and world receive the gift of saving life (i.e., with or without the specific characteristics) obscure the fundamental truth that each has been given it. The structural divisions should not modify the more important unity.

These characteristics have been summed-up traditionally under the three heads of priest, prophet, and king. These are the offices which Christ was given at his resurrection-ascension, and which he shares with his church. Oddly enough they have not often played a major part in theological writing, though Newman made notable use of them in the preface to his final edition of the *Via Media*, as did Congar in his *Lay People in the Church*, and the Council's *Constitution on the Church* is based on them, especially in chapters 2 and 4. It will be useful to take them in turn to elaborate the points I have made.

*The priestly office.* The idea that Christ's act of redemption, his passage from this world to the Father, can be understood in the sacrificial terms that derive from the old testament, came to play a central part in Christian thinking only com-



paritively late in the apostolic age: it is most completely worked out in the letter to the Hebrews (chapters 7-10). The author draws a parallel between the passage of Christ to the Father and the passage of the Jewish high priest, bearing sacrifice, into the innermost temple, the presence of God. But there are important differences, one of which is that Christ takes mankind with him (Heb 10: 19) instead of leaving them outside, so he mediates between men and God by this establishment of covenant-relationship (Heb 9: 15).

The priestly character of the church similarly brings in this idea of mediation, being based on the description of Israel in Ex 19:6: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The idea of this fairly late passage is probably related to what we have seen already in Is 40-55; Israel does the will of God for the other nations. The relationship between Christ's priesthood and the church's is not very explicit in the new testament, but in the passage (1 Pet 2:5-9) where the exodus description is applied to the church it is probably implied by the same metaphor of "living stone" (connected with the stones of the temple) being used for each:

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiri-

tual house, to be a holy priesthood. [1 Pet 2:4-5.]

The church is thus priestly on behalf of the world because Christ is priest on behalf of mankind. The mediation of the church is of course completely subordinate to his. It is not easy to state explicitly how the church's presence to the world is necessary, within the plan of salvation, for the world to be saved. There have in fact been long periods in the church's history when salvation outside the visible church was denied. There is no liturgical link to explain through its symbolism something of what has happened, as for example within the church the liturgy of baptism shows what it brings about, the union of men with Christ through the visible community of faith. We are forced to speak of an invisible manner of being linked to that community in the case of the unbaptised. Certainly in the eucharist the church consciously includes the world in the offering it makes with Christ to the Father, but the mediation involved has probably not yet been given its final description. We can only say it is because the priestly community exists that God can speak to men, in other ways, outside it.

In a similar way we can speak of the necessity, according to God's plan, for a further sense of priesthood within the priestly community of the

church. The eucharist is presided over by an ordained minister whose function is to say the thanksgiving prayer through which the consecration of the sacrificial meal takes place. Yet we know that it is not merely the ordained priest but the whole priestly people, including him, who offer themselves and the world with Christ to the Father. The mediating action of the ordained priest, once again, is thus totally subordinate to that of Christ, who gives to both priest and people this power to offer with him, though in different ways. The recognition of this fact lies at the basis of the liturgical renewal with its emphasis on the active participation of every member of the *laos* in the celebration of the sacraments.

What I have said about the church's priestly character is familiar enough. But it has not been sufficiently seen that it can be used to clarify the nature of the prophetic and kingly offices. In the two following sections this model, established by liturgy, ought to be borne in mind: the church is distinguished by her priestly character within the unity of the kingdom of God, and the cleric is distinguished in a similar way within the unity of the church as a whole. In each case, under the one mediator Christ, the smaller body mediates between the larger and God, but only in the sense explained—not, for instance, as a kind of channel



through which something passes. The Spirit is given to the whole, but it is necessary that the part is present in each.

*The church's prophetic office.* Christ became not merely the prototype priest, but the prototype prophet, "the prophet like Moses" of Deut 18:15, 18 (see also Ac 3:22). Thus the new Israel, like the old, is a prophetic people. Prophecy is not just fore-seeing the future, but changing it; the prophet in Israel declared the will of God, usually with a strongly radical bent. One sees it well in Amos, striding into the midst of the Bethel liturgy with his

For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes—they that trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth. [Am 2:6-7.]

Under Christ the prophetic element is now permanent in the church, which is essentially missionary in character, proclaiming its radical message to the whole world. Even through the ages of enlightenment and establishment this revolutionary attitude has never been entirely lost.

Teaching is not however simply delivering a message and hoping it will be picked up; it implies



communication. There must be response and therefore dialogue. The teacher must also learn in order to reach a truth shared with the pupil. If this is to be so in the church's dialogue with the world it must first be so within the Christian community itself. If there were simply a majority within the church passively receiving information from a minority this would make dialogue impossible outside the church too.

Theologically there can be no justification for this situation. Christian understanding, the faith, belongs to the community as a whole rather than to individuals, who receive it from the whole as they enter fully into membership. We shall see in a moment that this shared faith is given differently within the church's structure, but the primary fact is that it is given, being the share the church has, as prophetic, in the mind of Christ. There is thus a genuinely common culture in the church, the life of the Spirit. This life is given its common public expression in the community activity of liturgy, especially through the liturgy of the word in which scripture is proclaimed and commented on. In principle the liturgy thus provides the common teaching of the church. It is the faith, the life of God for the church. This is what John means when he says that the Spirit is our only teacher:

The anointing which you receive from him abides

in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him. [1 Jn 2:27.]

Yet in practice we know that teaching in a more ordinary sense is necessary. Just as we need literary critics to show us how to read, we need theologians to help us to understand what we do when we live the liturgy or our moral life. They do good, not harm, so long as they do not stand in the way of its living language or even try to replace it. Unfortunately for many centuries in the church theology has often done both these things. Nor should we forget that the Spirit can by-pass the professions and raise up from any part of the community men with new and revolutionary teaching able to create wholly new patterns; the charisms of the Spirit are neglected or suppressed in ages of conventionalism but are always liable to re-appear.<sup>1</sup> Whoever teaches, the important thing is that he does not impose alien patterns on the basic scriptural-liturgical expression of faith, but helps to make it plain. Our catechisms are sufficiently eloquent warning of what can go wrong.

The expression of faith is thus dynamic. It is not something we store in books and consult when

<sup>1</sup> See Hans Küng, "The Charismatic Structure of the Church", *Concilium* IV, 1 (April 1965), 23-33.

need arises, but lives in minds which have contact with the mind of Christ. Because it is human it has a human history. From age to age new aspects of it come forward, while others get forgotten. Expressions which are adequate for earlier times will not do for later ones, and so on. How then do we decide which of these are authentic developments and which corruptions? In the Catholic Church this decision traditionally lies with the college of bishops having the pope at its head and meeting in council. Once again the reason for this lies in the identity of faith and liturgy: those who preside over the liturgy ultimately determine the expression of faith. Now in principle there can be no difference between the faith expressed by the bishops in council, or by the pope as their head, and the faith held by the community as a whole. Neither derives from the other, since each, though in different ways, is received from Christ. Practically this should come about because bishops are not separate from their communities, and long periods of discussion, also involving theologians in contact with the whole community, precede any decision.

Probably this has always happened, but sometimes only after long delays. Attempts to impose ideas on the community alien to their own do in the long run fail. The most notorious example of such an attempt was the fourth-century situation in which the world "groaned to discover that it



was Arian". Councils attended by large numbers of bishops made Arianising statements, yet these were not in the end accepted, largely it would seem because the consciousness of the faithful as a whole was opposed to them. Or one may ask how much of the official pronouncement of medieval or even nineteenth-century popes (Boniface VIII's *Unam Sanctam*, Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*) has not been silently neglected for the same reason. Even *ex cathedra* statements come in time to take on different senses from those originally intended, after living for centuries in the mind of the community.

This is not an ideal situation: we must act to change it. With our present changes in literacy and general culture, vastly more discussion is possible than has been the case since the beginning of the "dark ages", and we are in a position to ensure much more immediate correlation between different expressions of the one faith from the structured community, for technological advance has given us vastly greater possibilities of communication. Only good-will on both sides is needed. The present gaps are painful and unnecessary, even though they will eventually be always closed. As the Abbot of Downside put it in a recent review (*The Tablet*, 11 September 1965), the distinction between "the church teaching" and "the church taught" is not absolute. "They are, perhaps,



rather two aspects of a single entity than two distinct entities." This, it seems to me, is what theology shows us, and if it is so we must act to ensure that practice comes into line with truth.

*The kingly office.* For us today the overtones of "king" are misleading, more probably even than "prophet", since the institution still exists. The world can let anachronisms by, but has seen too much of kingship to be happy with it. Jesus had just this problem to contend with during his earthly life: the overtones of tyranny in the word "messiah" made it impossible for him to use it of himself. According to the apostolic teaching God nevertheless appointed him messiah at his resurrection-ascension (Ac 2:36; Rom 1:4); he was then given authority by the Father. Over what? Paul says over the enemies of mankind. Men are under the power of sin and death, instruments of evil angelic powers; Israel was in addition under the power of the law, good in itself, but in practice only another source of sin. These were all put under the power of Christ, but in order that this authority could be shared with us. Since these ideas are, despite their importance, so little accepted, let me quote three typical passages in which Paul expresses them. He says of Christ:

[God] raised him from the dead and made him

sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church. [Eph 1:20-22.]

Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. [1 Cor 15:24-25.]

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do; sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. [Rom 8:2-4.]

This relationship of freedom with authority seems strange if we still think in liberal individualistic terms of freedom *from* authority. Paul is speaking of the freedom which is given when we *have* authority, and are no longer under the tyranny of law as an instrument of unjust rule. In this he

includes even the commandments of the old law given to Moses on Sinai:

God . . . has qualified us to be ministers of a new covenant, not in a written code but in the Spirit: for the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters of stone, came with such splendour that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face . . . [2 Cor 3:6-7.]

We have been given the authority as a community to decide our own course of action, and this means we can be free from the restraint of all external norms, for however good they are in themselves they may become the "dispensation of death" to a sinful world. This is not a question of decision by individuals in isolation, for that would imply the lawlessness which Paul had so often to protest he was not advocating. Men, he insists, have come of age with Christ, and our decisions may involve the overthrow of all the old institutions if these stand in the way of the new authority we have been given.

Once more this authority has been given to us for the world. Christians are committed to acting within the world, not only to teaching it. They have thus to act within the world's structures, not merely in special Christian ones. Where the



world's structures are essentially undemocratic the Christian must act to destroy them; where they are democratic he must act to support and extend them. The authority of self-determination, rather than determination by external agents and external laws, can be won for the world just as it is given to the church. But here we have to ask to what extent such freedom exists within the church, and where change can be brought about if it is necessary.

The pattern already established by our discussion of the other characteristics of the church shows us that here too there is a dual authority, that of the total community and that of a part, and that neither can contradict the other, since each is from Christ. Since the college of bishops with the pope at its head is not divided from the whole *laos*, what they have been commissioned by Christ to ask of us cannot be such as to lessen the authority of the church generally.

History has in fact seen intolerable clashes, though not always between the church as a whole and the hierarchy as a whole, which is all that is in question here. We can hardly expect local communities and local clergy at every period or place never to have fallen out of step with the whole. But it would be hard to deny (partly because change has shown it up) that the immediate past, particularly from 1870 on, has been one in which the authority of the community has been minimal,



since an extraordinary proliferation of laws has imposed on it the will of what has often turned out to be a curial minority of the hierarchy. Reform has now set in, but reform is not enough. Until this legalism has been entirely swept away, and the authority of church and hierarchy not only become one but have been seen to do so, we can hardly speak of the gospel freedom given by Christ. I do not pretend to know how we are to set about making the church a model for the world in this respect as in the others. A great deal is being written about the nature of parish and diocese, the choice of bishops, the ways in which the mind of the *laos* can actually be established. We may suspect that they will do little more than modify the present situation in a liberal direction, though this may not be entirely fair. As yet a detailed plan has certainly not been worked out. But as Christians we believe that the Spirit is always acting on men to change those community structures which they have wrongly built, and that it is always our task—not that of later generations—to make all things new according to his guidance.

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